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NEW STATESMAN
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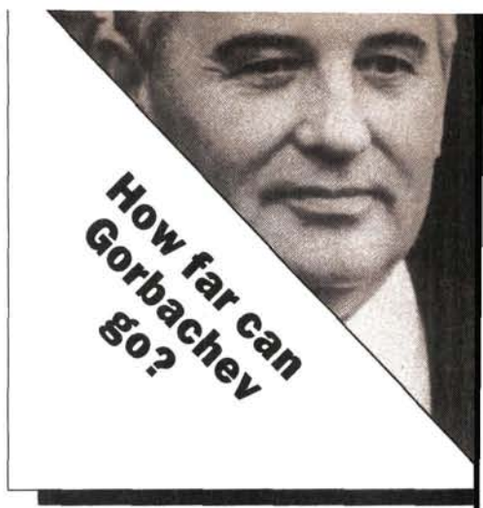
The BBC abandons its reporters; The Ruskin affair
The Westland row — 'The constitution is what happens'
Performance art in Nottingham and London



How far can Gorbachev go?

BANG GOES THE CITY

'An unpatriotic casino which pays itself obscenely high salaries for dancing on the grave of British industry?'

Photo: Rex Features

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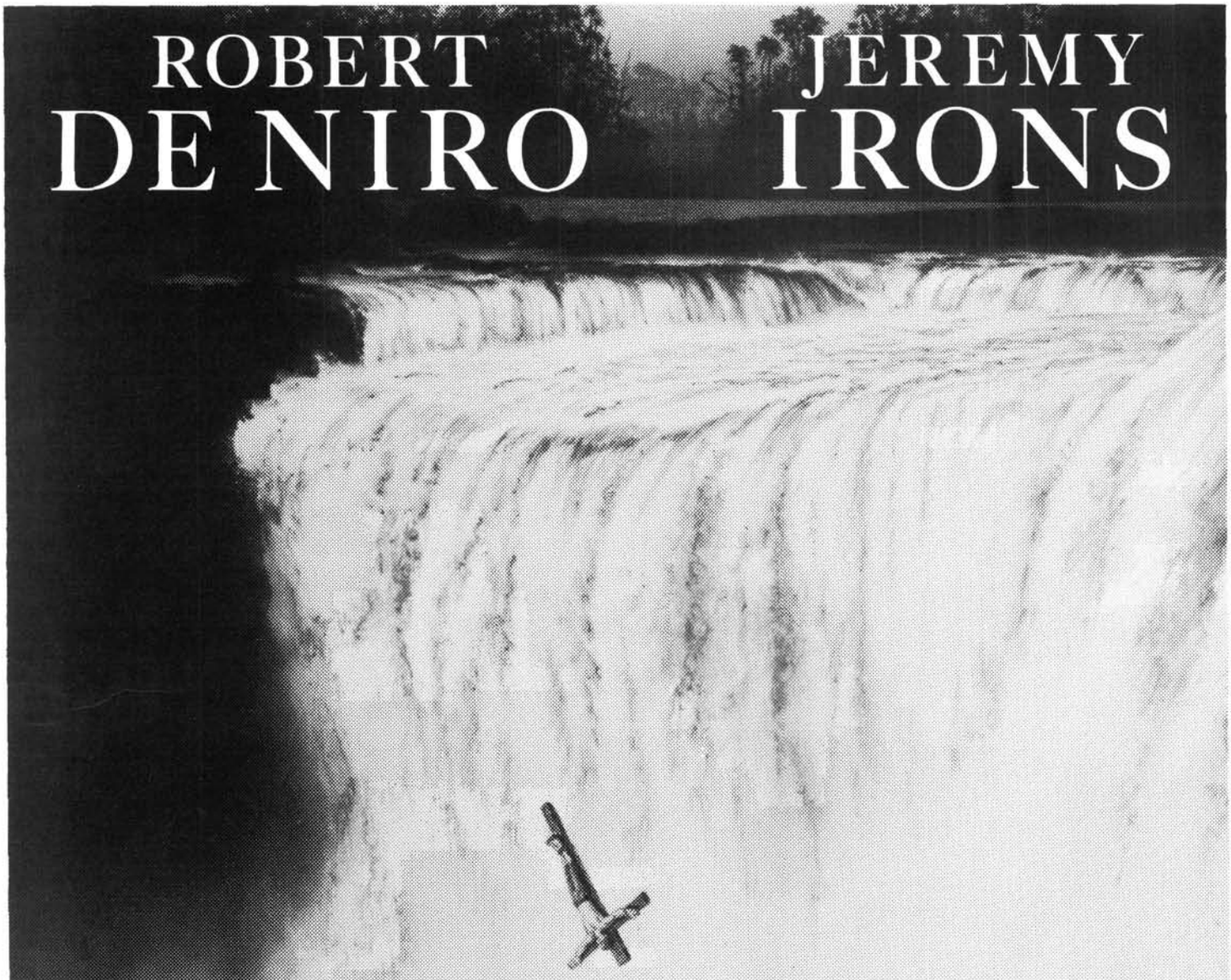
ROBERT DE NIRO JEREMY IRONS



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NEW STATESMAN

Vol 112 No 2900 24 October 1986

CONTENTS

FEATURES

Peter Kellner Ban the Bomb, 1980s style 5
David Goodhart and **Charles Grant**: Big Bang — the City goes global 6
Peter Hennessy: Westland — making up the constitution as She goes along 10
Neil Malcolm: Gorbachev's new thinking 12
Phil Williams: NATO after Reykjavik 13
Haydn Shaughnessy: Share owners sell up 15
Peter Gillman: Gissa TSB share 18
John Lloyd: BBC — shameful retreat or cock-up? 19
Paul Hirst: Row at Ruskin 20
Haydn Shaughnessy: Edwina, politician, dietician . . . 22
Denis MacShane: Heathrow Asians not an isolated incident 22

ARTS

Alex Graham: Independent video 23
Kenneth Rea: *Akademia Ruchu* 24
Stephanie Jordan: Royal Ballet 24
Judith Williamson: Cinema 25
Naseem Khan: Work in progress on performance art at Nottingham 26
Victoria Radin: New York theatre and opera 27
Hugo Williams: Television 27

BOOKS

Adèle Geras: Judy Blume 28
Sheila MacLeod: Dea Trier Mørch 29
Julian Rathbone: Paperbacks 29
Richard Weekes: Nicaragua 30
Peter Tatchell: Greening the economy 31

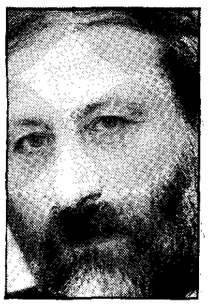
BACKCHAT

Anna Del Conte: Venetian cookery 36
Adrianne Blue: The Koestler controversy 37
Crossword 37
Weekend competition 38
John Minnion 39
George Botterill: Chess 39
This England 39

PLUS

Roger Woddis 18
Letters 32

NEXT WEEK



Britain's education is in deep crisis. As fears mount over an erosion of standards, and as the rolls of the independent schools swell, what is the left's response?
Plus: The Ruskin row and David Selbourne (left) — a full analysis; and the new servant class for the new middle class — or, yuppiestairs downstairs

A burden upon us

GORDON BROWN, Labour MP for Dunfermline East, has done the country a huge service. On Monday of this week, he revealed to the press the contents of a report on regional development assembled by the Department of Trade and Industry for the European Commission — a report which, had not he been assiduous enough to dig it out, would have remained a secret.

In 17 volumes and some 500,000 words it says that Britain isn't working, and isn't going to work. It says that over 3.1m people will still be out of work by 1990; that unemployment cannot fall unless 'fundamental problems' in the public provision of training, education and infrastructure are resolved; and that, in the regions which are presently the worst affected by unemployment, there will be no relief — things will get worse.

In Scotland, unemployment will rise by 1.5 per cent : the outlook in Manchester is 'gloomy' and in Merseyside 'frighteningly bleak'. The North East has 'a weak economic structure, an inadequate infrastructure, a shortage of qualified people, environmental dereliction and social deprivation'. Its mining will have been halved again from its present depleted levels and its shipyard industry will suffer 'further rationalsation'.

The West Midlands appears even more dismal because its prosperity is still relatively recent. Some 125,000 manufacturing jobs are forecast to disappear with little chance of a compensatory growth in services: a large reason is a private sector 'starved of capital' and 'continuing restraints on public expenditure'.

All around, the authors of the report — civil servants, for the most part, and academic economists — see decay: but the only change is an accentuation of the terrible trends. At the core of the report is this message: that a revitalised economy which depends on the unaided efforts and investment of the private sector, and the benign greed of entrepreneurs, has failed to occur in most places outside the South East.

The report delineates a relatively comfortable southern belt and a grouping of bitter homelands. When people in South Wales read that 'the overall economic activity rate in Wales is lower than any other region of Great Britain and is expected to remain so during the period that this programme covers' — can they be expected to feel that government policies have not had long enough to 'work through'? Or workers of Yorkshire and Humberside when they read that nearly 300,000 of them will be out of work in 1990?

The report portrays a hideous disaster: a political failure more comprehensive than any since the inert governments of the depression years — worse than these, since none had the experience of state-led expansionism which has been available since the last war. It is the foremost reason, overarching all other considerations of current politics, why this government must be defeated come the next election. It is a burden upon us. □

Damned with faint Prize

WHEN WOLE SOYINKA, the Nigerian writer, was asked how he felt about winning the Nobel Prize for Literature last week, his reply was unequivocal and immediate: 'This prize is a recognition of our culture and our traditions in Africa and I'm very glad about it. African culture has not always been understood by other cultures, for instance in Europe.'

Soyinka *had* gained recognition here: he received the *New Statesman*/John Whiting award for 1966/67, and in 1968 won the *Statesman*'s Jock Campbell award. Yet the reaction in much of the British press to the Nobel was crass: the *Daily Telegraph* began its report (17 October) by saying that the award 'appears to have been a face-saving gesture after severe criticism that only white Westerners receive Nobel prizes'. That Soyinka, in other words, is black and African is everything: that he is a writer is merely convenient.

Most other papers, with the decent exceptions of the *Observer* and the *Independent*, ignored the award or treated it with little seriousness. They might have read one of Soyinka's essays, 'From a Common Black Cloth', written 20 years ago, where he describes the European critic confronting African literature as one who, 'full of the burden of an alien tradition, appears to have brainwashed himself of existing standards. In some cases he has even undergone a deliberate mental retardation, a sort of: takes a simpleton to understand a child'.

The award should have been a matter for celebration for the British themselves, to whom Soyinka paid the highest compliment by taking the language they gave him and making it, gloriously, his own. □

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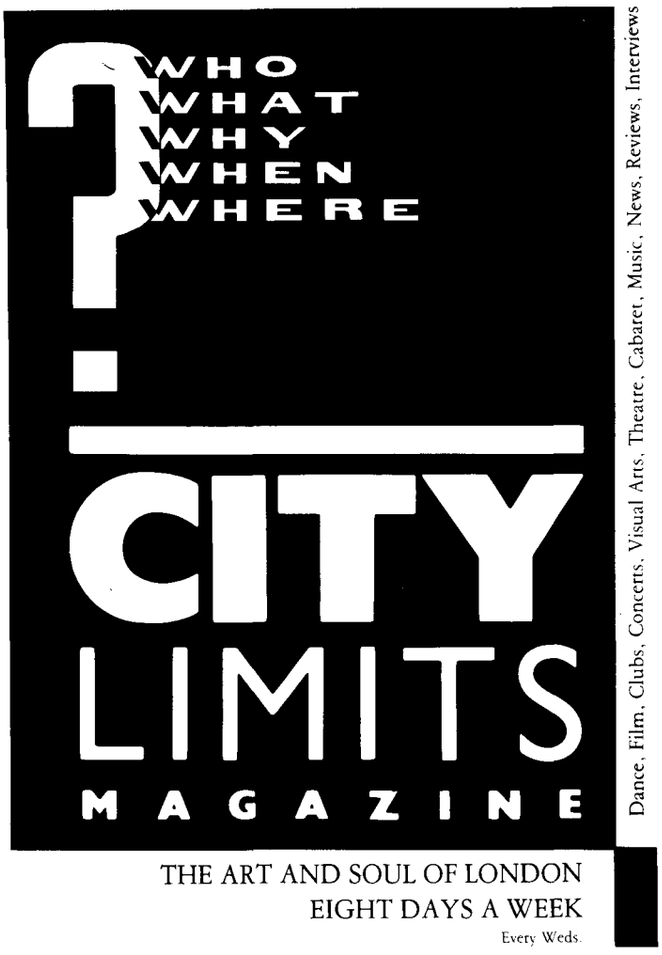

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Talking Sanity

Getting rid of the British Bomb

How will Britain get rid of its nuclear weapons? Will an anti-nuclear government get international support for its policies? Will the civil service and the military put obstacles in its way? How can we ensure that election promises are kept?

With a General Election on the way, Sanity magazine is sponsoring a series of four public meetings to talk about these issues. The emphasis will be on discussion.

Space is limited — so book now!

Monday October 27th
Going it alone? The international dimension
Jonathan Steele from the Guardian, CND vice-Chair Dan Smith and George Robertson MP join CND General Secretary Meg Beresford

Tuesday November 11th
No Minister?
Clive Ponting, Joan Ruddock, and Scilla McLean from the Oxford Research Group

Monday November 24th
The peace movement and a disarming government
Bruce Kent, Clare Short MP, Bea Campbell and Elena Lieven

Monday 8th December
A disarming Britain?
Jim Wallace MP, Mary Kaldor of END join CND's parliamentary worker Marjorie Thompson

The meetings will take place at the Council Chamber, Camden Town Hall, Euston Road, London NW1. Doors open 7.00pm. Meeting 7.30 - 9.30pm. Tickets £5.00 for four sessions, or £1.50 a session, unwaged half price) are available from Colin James, CND, 22-24 Underwood Street, London N1 7JG. Cheques payable to CND Publications.
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Flat-out attack on anti-gay laws

A week when the temperature over the homosexual content of sex education became red-hot both in the London borough of Haringey and on the floor of the Commons (resumed Education Bill debate, 21 Oct.) is the right one in which to disclose that NCCL is backing a comprehensive overhaul of British law as it affects lesbians and gay men.

A five-part draft Bill, *writes Andrew Lumsden*, expertly 'lawyerised' so that it could be laid before the House now, has been printed and will be further discussed at a conference in London early next year. Funds to promote awareness of the Bill have been put up by Campaign for Homosexual Equality, linear descendant of the pressure group which brought about partial decriminalisation of gay men in successive statutes from 1967-82.

Labour NEC is setting up a working party next month to consider these matters, in accordance with Conference resolution in 1985 and following the 79 per cent vote at this year's Conference requiring a manifesto commitment to bring in fresh legislation.

The preamble declares that: 'homosexual sex acts, whether between women or between men, are in no way inferior from the standpoint of public morality or policy or the public interest to heterosexual sex acts'. Abolition or amendment of a startlingly varied array of law, administrative directive, and judicial precedent would flow from consent to this principle.

Part 1 of the draft Bill deals *inter alia* with child custody, adoption, unfair dismissal, unlawful discrimination, actions for damages, and 'provocation' (the defence successfully used in mitigation by persons charged with murder of gay men that they were intolerably provoked by sexual 'advances'). Specifically lesbian concerns, it will be seen, are fully incorporated in parity with the concerns of gay men.

Part 2 tackles co-habitation rights, with implications for inheritances and immigration. Part 3 dismantles criminal laws, from blasphemy to unequal ages of sexual consent to armed forces law to unequal definitions of homosexual *versus* heterosexual 'privacy', which bring homosexuals before the courts when heterosexuals would have committed no offence. It abolishes the crime of buggery. Laws prohibiting *assault* are equalised between genders and orientations.

Parts 4 and 5 deal with the separate legal system of Scotland and disciplinary codes — of which latter, it may be guessed, Mrs Thatcher's 1982 prohibition on overseas postings of known lesbians or gays by the Foreign Office would be one. A specific new offence of 'incitement to violence against women' is created, affecting obscenity and street harassment law.

The conceptual thread running throughout the Bill is the removal of religious-inspired sexism and heterosexism from the criminal and civil practice of a modern secular state. The 56 clauses and sub-clauses are the product of six months work by the Labour Campaign for Lesbian & Gay Rights.

Jo Richardson, prospective minister for women in a Labour government, has yet to study the Bill: 'But I see the sense of it in principle, and lesbian aspects of women's disadvantages would certainly be the business of a ministry for women. Issues raised for both gay men and lesbians go well beyond the sole concern of the Home Office' (which presided over the 1967 law changes under Labour's Roy Jenkins). ●

Legislation for Lesbian & Gay Rights is available from L & GRB, Room 221, 38 Mount Pleasant, London WC1X 0AT for £1 inclusive.

'Thought police'

HERE ARE some facts about the '180 Thought Police' the *Mail on Sunday* says Brent Council is recruiting to 'patrol schools for prejudice'. Firstly, they're *teachers* — an elementary fact that somehow went unreported. They're to be paid for with 'section 11' Home Office money, which is set aside to give educational help to people of Commonwealth origin.

Brent took the view that so many of its children originated from the Commonwealth that it made sense to spend the money on more teachers, so that pupil-teacher ratios could be reduced. Some teachers could be identified as being paid for by section 11 money. Most couldn't.

The Home Office objected to this system, and during the summer cut off Brent's grant. The teachers meanwhile remained employed. Brent reluctantly tried to produce schemes that would give particular teachers race-specific jobs, as the Home Office wanted, and came up with the one that has caused all the fuss. ●

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PETER KELLNER

Can Labour sell its defence policy to the voters?

SO NEAR and yet so far. The solidity of Labour's support — it has seldom dipped below 35 per cent in recent months, and two post-conference polls have put it above 40 per cent — should give Neil Kinnock cause for optimism. If all else were equal, he could reasonably expect to emerge from the next general election as Prime Minister (even if, as in the mid-'60s and mid-'70s, it takes Labour two general elections to secure power for a full five-year term).

All else is not equal, however. Defence lost Labour votes during the last election campaign, and it could cost Labour votes in the next one. If the Conservatives succeed in convincing electors that the nation's defences are not safe in Labour's hands, it will not matter how persuasive Kinnock sounds on social policy, or how carefully Roy Hattersley does his economic sums; Labour will lose the next election.

Last week I reported opinion poll evidence of public attitudes to defence. This suggested that getting rid of nuclear weapons unilaterally remains a minority view — although the minority has been gradually growing over the past few years. It also showed a clear hostility to the presence of American nuclear weapons in Britain.

Some more evidence is published this week; once again it provides ambiguous signals about Labour's policy. A MORI poll conducted last year in London for the Greater London Area War Risks Study* finds that 67 per cent of Londoners think they would be 'very unlikely' to survive more than six months after a nuclear war: they would be burnt or blasted or radiated to death first. Only 23 per cent say they hope to survive.

Kinnock and Denzil Davies, Labour's shadow defence secretary, clearly strike a chord with public opinion when they argue that nuclear wars are unwinnable, and that to embark on one is to commit national suicide. Their problem is to take voters on the next logical step of their argument and show that their policy makes nuclear war less likely. After all, no sensible Tory will argue that nuclear wars are fun; most will even concede that it would be suicidal to fight one. They appeal to voters on different grounds: that Polaris, cruise and, in due course, Trident are designed to deter the Russians (or anyone else) from attacking us in the first place.

BEHIND THAT argument lies a vaguer but yet more potent charge against Labour: that the party is at root opposed to *any* serious participation in NATO. Here left-wingers like Tony Benn enjoy a rare meeting of minds with the Conservatives in arguing that the very essence of NATO is its nuclear strategy, and that if Britain is to opt out of this, it might as well quit NATO completely.

If that argument were valid, Britain's defence budget could be cut by three quarters. All we would need would be our nuclear weapons, some troops for Northern Ireland and a garrison at Port Stanley. (If we decided to pull out of Ulster and the Falklands, we could presumably disband the army, navy and air force altogether.)

In fact, most of our military resources are applied to non-nuclear military purposes. By concentrating on this point, Labour should be able to make its policy more popular, for it is possible to show that it is the Conservatives who are putting Britain's defence capability at risk.

The figures that follow are taken from *Trends in UK Defence Spending in the 1980s*, by Malcolm Chalmers of the Bradford School of Peace Studies**. Chalmers himself derives his data from official sources.

On current plans, defence spending will grow from £18,222m in 1985/86 to £19,570m in 1989/90 — an increase in cash terms of 7 per cent. However, inflation will be greater than that. Even assuming that inflation stays low, there will still be a reduction of 6 per cent in real defence spending.

Having calculated this global figure, Chalmers then costs the public commitments that the Ministry of Defence have made. On the basis of figures published in the 1981 Defence Review, as modified by subsequent defence white papers, Chalmers foresees a reduction of some 8,000 troops and 26,000 civilian staff between 1984 and 1990. Even so, their total pay bill will increase, as armed forces pay and pensions are expected to continue to rise in line with earnings, which almost invariably exceed inflation. Pay and related running costs amount to almost half Britain's total defence budget. According to Chalmers, this is how the sums work out:

UK Defence spending, 1985/86 to 1989/90
£m at 1984/85 prices

	1985/6	1989/90	Change
Total	17,190	16,085	−6%
Running costs	8,293	8,485	+2%
Amount available for equipment etc:	8,897	7,600	−14%

This equipment total can be divided into two main categories: new equipment, and the costs of spares, repairs and maintenance. Chalmers estimates that the amount available for new equipment will decline (in 1984/85 prices) from £4,916m in 1985/86 to £4,154m in 1989/90 — a fall of 16 per cent. It is from this section of the defence budget that the costs of Trident must be found.

We are approaching the peak years for spending on Trident. About £200m was spent in 1985; the figure will rise (again, at 1984/85 prices) to £950m in 1989/90. When this is deducted from the new equipment budget, the amount left for other new equipment falls from £4,176 in 1985/86 to £3,204 at the end of the decade — a reduction of no less than 32 per cent.

It is clear from Chalmers' calculations that the Tories' defence plans are in a mess. They have three options if they stay in power: increase spending on defence faster than they have admitted (which would mean higher taxes), *or* cancel Trident, *or* reduce our conventional defence strength. One of Labour's pre-election aims should be to draw the Conservatives on which of these options they intend to pursue.

A LABOUR government would face the same kind of figures. According to both Denzil Davies and Neil Kinnock, Labour would use the savings from cancelling Trident not to cut defence spending in the early years, but to help the equipment budget.

Since the party's defence policy is constructed round the argument that Western Europe can only sensibly be defended by conventional weapons, it clearly follows that Labour's spending on such weapons must be sufficient to make a conventional strategy work — and, more immediately, to persuade British voters that the strategy will work.

The Reykjavik summit ought to help. Mrs Thatcher and Chancellor Kohl are clearly scared by the possibility that the United States and the Soviet Union will do a deal withdrawing all intermediate nuclear weapons from Europe, including cruise, Pershing and SS20 missiles. Such a deal would destroy NATO's ability to use cruise and Pershing to retaliate against Soviet forces should the Kremlin decide for some reason to invade West Germany. Unless western Europe were to rely on Washington using its strategic nuclear weapons, it follows that in the post-Reykjavik world conventional weapons are likely to have a substantially greater role.

Which is where we, and Labour Party policy, came in. The greatest mistake Labour's leadership could make would be to imply that spending on Trident can be turned into new hospitals or brighter schools. More money for conventional defence is a sensible policy and may become an inevitable one.

Other awkward questions follow. For example: can Britain afford to remain both a European and a vestigially international power? The answer is almost certainly not. One aspect of an affordable non-nuclear defence policy is that some kind of deal will have to be done with Argentina over the Falklands — just as the present government has done with China over Hong Kong.

It comes down to this. Labour's policy means — rightly, in my view — that the last remnants of Britain's imperial, world power status must explicitly be dismantled. Britain's role is that of a struggling, middle-sized and specifically European power. Asserting that means stripping away a number of comforting illusions — among some voters and also among some Labour activists. It is possible that the enterprise of removing those illusions will work if the effort is started now; if it is left to a general election campaign it will surely fail. □

*Published in *London Under Attack*, Basil Blackwell, £3.95.
**Available from the School of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, BD7 1DP; £30.

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The internationalisation of capital

'Anybody know which country we're in?'

Observer

The wave of creative destruction sweeping through the UK's financial markets is capitalism at its dynamic best — respecter of neither persons nor institutions — and, potentially, at its unstable, corrupt worst.

DAVID GOODHART *and* **CHARLES GRANT** *report*

FOR THE LARGE investment institutions next week's Big Bang — bringing the abolition of two 75-year-old restrictive practices in the Stock Exchange — is the equivalent of abandoning the grubby, over-priced, corner shop with its quaint conventions and personal service for Sainbury, where the food is fresher and the prices lower. But it also means abandoning a system which has effectively protected investors against fraud and in which, thanks to the City's social and geographic insularity, my word (usually) has been my bond.

Does it matter? Why should a few reforms to Britain's equity (share) market and the closely linked gilts (government debt) market be of any concern? The equity market, after all, provides only a small part of the capital needs of the 'real' economy and is only one of several centralised capital markets which constitute the modern City.

It matters because the real economy *will* be affected — albeit indirectly — and, more important, it matters because it is a symptom of a momentous shake-up to the world financial system, the impact of which on industry and politics is still barely understood.

World-wide and short-term

For more than 20 years finance has been on a rapid march towards the twin destinations of deregulation and internationalisation. The managers of capital flows have been able to seek out the highest returns with growing disregard for government controls or national boundaries.

Signposts along this path in the UK include the

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1971 abandonment of fixed exchange rates (led by the US), the early 1970s liberalisation of bank credit controls, the ending of foreign exchange controls in 1979 with the subsequent outflow of £80bn in foreign investment, and the growing turnover in foreign exchange markets — now estimated at £60bn a *day* in London.

The new world is best exemplified by the Euromarkets (see box) which have been growing rapidly in London — although dominated by foreign banks — since the 1960s. Efficient, innovative and unregulated, they link governments and companies to lenders in all continents. They dwarf the Stock Exchange: turnover in the tradeable bonds which emanate from these deals is now five times the annual turnover in the UK equity and gilts markets.

> ***This new world presents the left with a tantalising political paradox. Ancient prejudices against finance are being stimulated by the growing belief that the City has become an unpatriotic casino. But this same liberalisation narrows the options available to any government — especially a Labour one***

London's increasingly internationalised markets in bonds and currencies have introduced new practices and mentalities: they are telephone and screen-based rather than face to face (as the Stock Exchange has been); they are more competitive, harder to regulate, and dominated by large financial conglomerates with a shorter-term view of investment.

These trends reflect the multinationalisation of finance. They will be accentuated by Big Bang which is bringing the practices of the 'new' City — Euromarkets and foreign exchange markets — into the 'old' City of the equity market (Stock Exchange) and gilts market. In the process new conglomerates are being formed through the acquisition by foreign and UK banks of many of the 100-plus small firms which have monopolised the dealing in shares and gilts. It is, as one broker said, 'the biggest change since we left the coffee houses in the 18th century'.

And about time. Behind their cartels, parts of the 'old' City had grown inward-looking and inefficient — at the end of the 1970s, for example, City solicitors had overtaken the Stock Exchange in foreign exchange earnings. While recommending the rigours of the free market for everyone else, the Stock Exchange itself has had to be dragged by its hair into the new world.

This new world presents the left with a tantalising political paradox. Ancient prejudices against finance are being stimulated by the growing belief that the City has become an unpatriotic casino which pays itself obscenely high salaries for dancing on the grave of British industry. Scandals at Lloyd's and the JMB Bank add to the anxieties.

In the months *after* Big Bang, in the run up to a general election, a combination of the possible failure of several financial groups and a rising tide of corruption stories could provide a further opportunity for Labour to place itself at the head of a groundswell of critical opinion.

But just when Labour is poised to benefit from the fall-out from financial deregulation, this same liberalisation enables capital to narrow the macro-economic options available to any government — especially a Labour one. As long as intangibles such as 'confidence' move financial markets, Labour has to impress upon the fund managers that while its economic priorities may be somewhat different from the City's, it remains responsible.

The traditional pressure points on a Labour government are the foreign exchange markets (a run on the pound) and the gilts market (where investors have been known to refuse to buy the gilts unless interest rates are pushed up). Recent developments have added two new twists. First, because of the internationalisation of the banking, equity and bond markets, institutional investors all over the world now hold large sums of sterling assets. A Labour government's interference in any of these markets would cause them to sell their assets, thus depressing the value of sterling (which will already be under attack in the foreign exchange markets) and, in the case of equities, depressing the value of the leading UK companies. Second, the re-establishment of London's pre-eminence as a financial centre provides valuable invisible earnings and employment, which could be used to blackmail Labour.

However, the economic sovereignty of governments has always been circumscribed in an open economy like Britain's; and the extent to which *new* financial trip-wires have been laid since Labour was last in office should not be exaggerated. Indeed, as we shall see, there are some benefits from internationalisation.

Technology and deregulation

First, a closer look at the causes and effects of Big Bang itself. Although it promises to return the City to its unregulated roots in the 19th century, its causes can be found germinating in the technology, politics and economics of the 1960s and 1970s.

The technology of direct dial international calls, telexes, and computerisation has caused the world to shrink. In the financial global village new information on a company performance, interest rate or government bond can be known — *and acted upon* — at the same moment anywhere in the world.

As the world shrunk, inflation-inspired volatility helped to undermine the old order by triggering a wave of financial innovation to reduce risk and avoid controls. Some multinationals had for years been avoiding the effect of national exchange and interest rates. In the late 1970s their tricks became more widely available.

The ubiquitous Third World debt crisis also prompted innovation on the part of the international banks seeking less risky ways of making money. They turned to the Eurobond market and the selling of companies' commercial paper (their short-term debt) to investors. That, in turn, made them interested in buying financial companies with expertise in the securities markets — including stockbrokers.

The US banks, prevented by US law from buying broking firms, were thus the first through the door, waving their cheque books, when the rule on outside ownership of Stock Exchange firms was relaxed. Three out of the four UK clearing banks were close behind.

But the most direct impetus to the opening up came not from thrusting City entrepreneurs or US bankers but from Shirley Williams, when Secretary of State for Prices and Consumer Protection in the last Labour goverment; and a branch of the state bureaucracy — the Bank of England. In 1976, Labour ordered the Stock Exchange to register its rule book with the Office of Fair Trading: the OFT found three main infringements of the Restrictive Practices Act. These were: limits on membership of the Exchange; the distinction between stockbrokers, who act as agents on behalf of investors, and stockjobbers who actually own and 'make a market' in company shares but only buy and sell through brokers; and the brokers' fixed commissions (of 1.65 per cent on deals of up to £7,000, but thereafter declining).

To the dismay of the Exchange, the OFT case was *not* called off when the Conservatives were elected in 1979. The Bank of England — overseer of the financial system — had become worried that the club rules were harming London as a financial centre: it was concerned too — responsible as it is for selling government debt — that, because of restricted entry to the gilts market, it was failing to secure the most competitive rates.

The removal of exchange controls in 1979 cruelly exposed the Exchange's inadequacies. Almost all the foreign investment which flowed out after 1979 was handled by foreign brokers. Business in leading UK shares began slipping away to Wall Street which had abandoned fixed commissions in 1975. The decline of the private shareholder and the 'professionalisation' of investment (about 70 per cent of all equities are owned by institutions) meant, after 1979, that because of the huge number of shares traded at one time, discrepancies in dealing costs between national equity markets became significant. (This was not all the fault of UK brokers, the government until recently charged a 2 per cent stamp duty on share transactions.)

The pressure for change had grown irresistible, but the Bank of England considered that a court-room was not the best place to thrash out a rational programme of reform. Hence the famous 'deal' in 1983 between Cecil Parkinson and Nicholas Goodison, chairman of the Exchange, in which the government agreed to drop the court case and Goodison agreed to the three reforms. It was not a fudge. The government and the Bank got everything they wanted.

The passing of the partnerships

The last three years have been a period of furious activity for most Stock Exchange firms. Like the German principalities which survived into the age of world empires, the City partnerships have lifted their heads from their petty squabbles and discovered that they are anachronisms. In the era of superpowers and multinationals, the international financial supermarkets have arrived and all but one of the top UK stockbrokers are now part of one — indeed about 60 per cent of this last 'English' enclave of the City is now foreign-owned. ▷

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The old broking partnerships lived off fixed commission and needed very little capital. They were thus doomed in a world where you must be able to take huge chunks of shares or bonds onto your books at a moment's notice before selling them on. Some brokers, like de Zoete and Bevan, and jobbers like Wedd Durlacher, have sold out to UK banks to form, in the latter case, Barclays de Zoete Wedd. Others signed up with foreign banks or securities houses. In either case the partners — the owners — have pocketed huge sums and the dealers and analysts beneath them have seen their salaries rocket — partly because they are now entering an international labour market, and partly because, as the main assets in the firms, the new owners are keen to keep them.

The Governor of the Bank of England, Robin Leigh-Pemberton, whose continuation in office probably depends on the success of Big Bang, was last week urging the new conglomerates not to follow the logic of their very existences by competing too hard. But it is widely believed in the City that there will be a nasty hangover after Big Bang. There are just too many dealers chasing too few deals, and the survivors will be those who have the financial muscle to offer the lowest rates. The gilts market is the most extreme example. This has been dominated by just two jobbers but will now have 27 securities houses bidding for the government bonds. They have dedicated to this trade the same capital as the New York gilts dealers — but the market here is one-tenth the size!

There will be casualties: and most of them will be the medium-sized firms — mainly UK owned — without the advantages of either huge resources or specialist skills. The American investment banks provide the best-equipped competition but the Japanese are waiting in the wings — many fear that UK financial services could go the way of the motor and motorbike industries. As one British broker put it: 'In London, we've been playing cricket for centuries. When the Big Bang comes we're going to be asked to play baseball, which is difficult enough to cope with anyway. But our first match will be against the world champions.'

Trading places

THANKS TO the foreign banks in London, the City is a less stuffy and more meritocratic place than it was. Take Peter Ogden, who runs the Euromarkets new issues business of Morgan Stanley, one of the leading American investment banks. He reckons that someone with his background would never have got to the top of a British merchant bank. Born into a working-class family in Rochdale, educated at grammar school and endowed with a strong Lancashire accent, Ogden became a partner of Morgan Stanley three years ago at the age of 35.

Ogden's PhD in nuclear physics (from Durham University) has proved useful as an investment banker - even if it does exemplify the City's 'brain drain' from industry. He thinks up new financial techniques which keep Morgan Stanley ahead of its rivals and win it business from investors and borrowers. Such techniques are increasingly mathematical and familiarity with advanced computers helps to solve the cash flow problems.

Ogden enjoys the risk and responsibiities involved in putting together huge capital market transactions. He has pioneered many of the Euromarket's most important new products such as currency and interest rate swaps. Since the flotation of 20 per cent of Morgan Stanley last year Ogden's partnership is worth several million dollars. And people in his position at American investment banks in London get paid around $1m a year. 'Most of it I leave in the Halifax Building Society', he says, though he admits to the occasional flutter on options to buy Eurobonds.

His father was a trade union official, and Ogden always voted Labour until the last election, when he felt he was getting too rich to do so. But he says he remains a socialist at heart, opposed to class privilege and in favour of industrial democracy and more equality. 'Nothing makes me sicker', he says, 'than to hear landed people in Dorset (where he has a country house) complain how terrible it is that traders from Tower Hamlets are earning so much.' ●

Crumbling Chinese Walls

So how are the costs and benefits of this controlled explosion in the 'old' City likely to be scattered? Cutting the margins of financial intermediaries ought to be to the advantage of the real economy and the main consumers of financial services — big investment institutions, big companies and governments. Becoming more competitive, the City has also had to become harder working (as well as even better paid) and considerably more meritocratic (see box).

There are several immediate disadvantages too. The new system will place a terrible strain on London's light regulatory tradition. Many of the rules that are being dumped were invented, in part, to prevent conflict of interests. Under the old jobber/broker system the broker had no incentive to defraud the client, his commission stayed the same no matter what happened to the investor. But under the new system financial supermarkets will own shares themselves. If they get inside information will they use it for their own ends or tell their clients? If they are desperate for the price of a share they are carrying to rise, will the advice they give clients be independent?

Chinese Walls between different departments of the same firm are meant to prevent conflicts of interest. Few in the City believe they will be effective in the new competitive world — especially if the stock market turns down. Indeed, Chinese Walls may prove an unfortunate choice of phrase — 90 per cent of the Great Wall has crumbled.

Attempting to police the new framework and the rule-bending US securities houses will be the Self-Regulatory Organisations and at the heart of the system is the constrained Securities and Investment Board. Labour is not alone in supporting a tougher system of statutory regulation to halt the march of the 'corrupies': Sir John Nott, now chairman of merchant bank Lazard Brothers, supports it too.

Notwithstanding the wider share ownership crusade, life will be more difficult for the small investor after Big Bang. If the New York pattern repeats itself they will pay more at least initially. There could be problems, too, for small public companies which find there is no interest in trading their shares.

For public companies in general Big Bang is a mixed blessing. It encourages several trends industrialists have been complaining about for years. It will exacerbate the financial over-sophistication of the UK economy and will help to suck even more talented people from industry into the City. And why, a few dissenting voices are beginning to ask, do we need more efficient equity markets when the great post-war economic success stories — Japan and Germany — have been built on underdeveloped equity markets but close links between industry and the banks?

Industry is also worried that Big Bang will encourage the short-term investment horizons of many institutions — now even criticised by the Chancellor himself. This 'short-termism' is caused by the competitive monitoring of fund managers, and has helped contribute to the 'merger mania' of the past few years; fund managers are unable to resist a bid premium. Big Bang will further loosen the link between shareholders and companies by increasing turnover in the equity market and by spreading the shares of larger companies all over the world, thus placing them in the hands of investment managers who will have no concern for their long-term interest. The fear of take-over will thus concentrate management attention on keeping the share price up and artificially boosting profits — instead of making the long-term investment that everyone agrees is desirable.

Finally, the political balance sheet. If Labour returns to power, it will obviously face difficulties in the foreign exchange markets. But in the 'political' market most affected by Big Bang, gilts,

> ***'The Labour-in-handcuffs theory is based on an exaggerated view of just how footloose the financial conglomerates are'***

the increased competition could work to Labour's benefit making a gilts strike less likely. Indeed, the whole internationalisation of finance probably makes it easier for Labour to raise cheaper money from a wider spread of sources. A National Investment Bank could fund industry with loans from the Eurobond market following the example of the 3i investment institution (which funds small businesses), and even the present government which recently raised a £4bn loan in the market.

But will the new conglomerates provide a political threat? They are certainly large. With a market capitalisation of over £20 billion, Nomura Securities, from Japan, could buy all Britain's merchant banks and barely feel the strain. As the UK economy becomes increasingly dependent on dividends from its foreign investments and rent and rates from the City of London, will Labour policy have to avoid causing offence to these financiers?

Employment and invisible earnings *would* certainly be hit by the departure of the financial conglomerates — but not as dramatically as is sometimes claimed. It is true that finance is one of

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Euromarkets: a vibrant market in a weak economy

THE 550 FOREIGN banks in the City did not come for Big Bang. Most of them are uninterested in Britain's rather small (compared to the US and Japan) domestic stockmarket. They are in London because it is the capital of the commodity markets, the foreign exchange markets, and above all, the Euromarkets.

It is the Euromarkets which have halted London's decline as a financial centre and returned it to its 19th century status as the capital of international finance. They are *big*. The Eurobond market will raise $200bn of capital this year, compared with the £6bn of new shares the Stock Exchange raised last year: the Eurocurrency banking market has assets totalling $2.25 trillion.

The Euromarkets are a series of markets in which financial 'instruments' such as Eurobonds, Euro-equities and Eurocommercial paper are bought and sold with Eurocurrencies. A (misleadingly named) Eurocurrency is any currency held outside its country of origin. For example, a dollar held in a London bank account is called a Eurodollar.

Despite their size, the Euromarkets have little direct impact on the real economy of the UK. If the 30,000 people directly employed by the Euromarket members of the International Securities Regulatory Organisation (ISRO) packed their bags for Luxembourg, few industrialists would notice.

But it would not just be the owners of Porsche dealers, of Chelsea estate agents and of the City's new champagne bars who would lose good customers. Total revenues of ISRO members are estimated at $5bn a year, the bulk of which goes into demand on London's economy: salaries, construction, dealing rooms, computers, telephones etc. The Euromarkets provide about one-third of the £7.5bn of foreign exchange the City earned last year.

That would be painful to lose, but there is little danger of them departing. Foreign banks have invested so much in new buildings, new trading rooms, new computers and in training British staff that it would take a lot to move them to Luxembourg or Frankfurt — perhaps Tony Benn as Prime Minister imposing draconian foreign exchange controls.

It is a curious accident of history that one of Europe's weakest economies should play host to its most vibrant financial markets. The Euromarkets grew up in London in the 1960s, thanks to America's balance of payments deficit, which created a pool of dollars in Europe. Many of these Eurodollars were deposited with London banks because London was already a centre of trade finance.

The Eurodollar deposits attracted the big American banks to London. They came because London was freer of regulation than New York. In particular there were no minimum reserve requirements for Eurocurrency lending in London: banks did not have to deposit a proportion of their assets with the Bank of England at zero interest, as they have to do in most domestic banking markets. American and other foreign banks, therefore, flocked to London, as it was cheaper for them to make international loans from London than from elsewhere.

The banks financed these loans by borrowing from each other on what is known as the interbank market. The 1974 and 1979 oil price hikes boosted this Eurodollar market: Arabs deposited petrodollars with London banks, which recycled them by making huge international credits to the third world countries facing balance of payments crises.

The Eurobond market was inadvertently triggered by President Kennedy in 1963. He tried to shore up America's balance of payments by imposing a tax on bonds issued in the American market by foreign borrowers. To avoid this tax, borrowers started to tap the pool of dollars in Europe by issuing Eurobonds.

The first Eurobond was arranged by the British merchant bank, S G Warburg, but British banks and the Stock Exchange showed little interest in following, so virtually all the leading Eurobond banks are now American, Japanese, Swiss, French or German.

These London banks distribute Eurobonds all over the world to raise money for governments and companies. The Eurobond market can provide much larger sums than most domestic markets: the British government, for example, recently borrowed $4 billion in Eurobonds. Eurobonds are not traded on a physical trading floor, but by screen and telephone.

Because all the banks in the market are linked electronically, they can choose to put their office in almost any country. It was far from inevitable that the Eurobond market should moor itself to London, given that British borrowers, British banks and British investors account for only a small part of the market. Nevertheless, virtually all the important Eurobond banks *have* moved to London within the last decade, including recently Banque Paribas and Deutsche Bank.

The Americans like the language. London's time-zone overlaps with trading hours in New York and Tokyo. Even with the new financial services bill, London is relatively free from irksome regulations and punitive company taxes. Most important of all is the circular factor: because most Eurobond banks are in London, the City contains a fund of Eurobond expertise. If you want to hire the best Eurobond traders, or keep up to date with the latest Eurobond techniques, you need to be privy to London Euromarket gossip.

London's Euromarkets look set to continue their spectacular growth of the last few years, thanks to securitisation. This is the trend for bank loans to be converted into tradeable bonds. Multinationals like BP or ICI now tend not to borrow old-fashioned loans from their banks. Instead they issue securities like bonds or commercial paper, because it is cheaper. Cheaper, because investors accept a lower rate of interest in return for their investment being liquid, that is sellable. Securitisation accounts for the recent boom in Eurobonds and Eurocommercial paper issuance, as has the deflationary environment, which has encouraged investors worldwide to invest in financial assets.

Some officials of the Bank of International Settlements, the central bankers' bank, claim that it is destabilising the world financial system. Investors in paper issued by companies or countries take a short-term view compared with banks which make loans. Securitisation worries the commercial banks for a different reason — it has worsened the quality of their loan portfolios by stripping away loans to ICI and leaving loans to Latin America. The banks have also watched jealously as other financial institutions — investment banks, brokers — have cashed in on the securities boom. Through buying broking firms in London the banks are belatedly trying to catch up. ●

the few employment growth sectors, but of the 300,000 people who work in the City, nearly three quarters are employed in UK banks and other institutions and should not be affected by the departure of the more footloose financiers.

Similarly with invisible earnings: although they are notoriously difficult to calculate, it is estimated that, of the £7.5bn said to have been earned by the City in 1985, about two thirds came from the less mobile part. And if, as expected, UK financial conglomerates gradually sink into the arms of their US and Japanese rivals, the benefit to the balance of trade will be gradually reduced as the foreign companies repatriate the profits made in London.

Finally, the Labour-in-handcuffs theory is based on an exaggerated view of just how footloose the financial conglomerates are — they have a lot of money tied up here and will not leave in a hurry. The presence of a large part of the international financial community in London may actually present a future Labour government with a useful lever to help promote the kind of international regulation which could be desperately needed if the global financial free-for-all starts to foul up.

The bigger threat to financial sovereignty lies in the possibility that one or more UK clearing banks may, especially if crippled by Big Bang, be vulnerable to takeover by a foreign — most likely US — bank. Despite de-regulation the Bank of England still has wide powers over the UK banks. A foreign bank might resist being directed, especially by a Labour administration, claiming that it cannot comply because of its own state laws. This problem of 'extra-territoriality' should be stamped on by a Labour chancellor by not allowing such a takeover.

For the present, any left-of-centre government must learn to box clever with the financial multinationals just as it has learned to live with the industrial ones. It could be helped in that task by Big Bang's contribution to eroding the seclusion of the City — not a moment too soon, since three quarters of the adult population have savings invested there. As the City loses its mystique it should lose its power to mesmerise another Labour government — and may also become more vulnerable to the argument that it has failed in its basic function of linking savings to investment. □

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WHAT CONSTITUTION?

Raw politics decide procedure in Whitehall

As MPs contemplate Mrs Thatcher's dictum that civil servants may not be summoned before Select Committees* PETER HENNESSY *calls the Westland affair a proof that 'the Constitution' is merely whatever happens to happen

I BUMPED into a veteran observer of the constitutional scene, Professor John Griffith of the London School of Economics, in the Committee Corridor of the House of Commons as the smoke of Westland was still swirling through the Palace of Westminster. He came up with a new definition worthy of Bagehot at his tersest: 'The Constitution', he said, 'is what happens'.

So far the Westland affair has been a drama in seven parts. The eighth is now unfolding:

1. Autumn 1984-summer 1985. Routine industrial rescue case handled at interdepartmental level in Whitehall.
2. Summer-autumn 1985. Collective decisions taken at ministerial level.
3. Late November-mid-December 1985, issue becomes controversial within the machine as rival ministers and departments line up behind rival rescue schemes.
4. Mid-December 1985-early January 1986, Westland develops into an issue of Cabinet procedure.
5. The private debate goes public as rival departments brief and counter-brief the press and backbench MPs.
6. 9 Janury 1986 the issue explodes politically when Michael Heseltine, Secretary of State for Defence and champion of a European solution for Westland's travails, walks out of a Cabinet meeting and resigns.
7. Protracted aftermath as issue becomes a staple of party strife, embedded in select committee inquiries and enters political folklore as a *cause célèbre*.

The eighth phase began last week when the government issued its reply to the Commons Defence Committee's report on the affair, and prised open still further another constitutional can of worms — the disputed right of select committees to summon and interrogate civil servants, an issue high on the agenda of this Wednesday's private meeting of the Defence Committee at Westminster.

The standard constitutional view of the role of civil servants and ministers is as familiar as it is banal: civil servants are accountable to ministers, ministers are accountable to Parliament. This simple chain had already been broken routinely by select committee inquiries when MPs, at public hearings, had questioned named officials about individual items of policy on which they had advised ministers. The officials never disclosed that advice, but they became personally associated with areas of departmental activity.

Westland, according to a former permanent secretary speaking at a private gathering this summer, moved civil servants from a difficult position into 'an impossible position', a view shared by John Ward of the FDA, the top officials union. For a start, said the aggrieved retired official, it was the Prime Minister herself who named the five civil servants involved in the leaking of the Mayhew Letter during her Commons statement on the result of the Cabinet Secretary's inquiry into the leak of Solicitor General Sir Patrick Mayhew's letter to the Press Association on 6 January this year. Brittan had, in the end, accepted ministerial responsibility for *his* officials' actions and resigned. The Prime Minister had not. And ministers had prevented the five named officials from defending themselves before the Commons Defence Committee. For this particular seasoned public servant, Westland had changed the constitutional landscape beyond recognition. No civil servant in future would know where he or she stood.

By a nice irony of timing, the government published its reply to the Treasury and Civil Service Committee's report on the duties and responsibilities of civil servants on the same day in July that the Defence Committee released its outspoken criticisms of 'improper' ministerial and official behaviour over Westland. The reply was worded as if Westland had never happened:

> The government endorses the Committee's two basic propositions on accountability: that ministers and not officials are responsible and accountable for policy; and that officials' advice to ministers is and should remain confidential. Constitutionally, ministers are responsible and accountable for their departments in pursuit of government policies or in the discharge of responsibilities laid upon them by Parliament.

Such traditional verities were repeated almost verbatim in the government's reply last week to the Defence Committee report. For good measure that reply tightened the shackles which prevent an aggrieved civil servant from defending himself or herself before a select committee — an instruction has gone out from the Cabinet Office 'that they should not answer questions which are or appear to be directed to the conduct of themselves or of other named individual civil servants'.

Despite the grand constitutional language in which much of the Westland debate has been couched inside Parliament and out, it was raw politics and not matters of convention or probity that prevailed throughout. Managing a difficult colleague, not *Questions of Procedure for Ministers*, determined Mrs Thatcher' initial decision to let Michael Heseltine go rogue and prepare a European alternative to Sikorsky. Damage limitation and not the imperatives of collective responsibility lay behind her efforts to rein him in in mid-December. Assertion of her political supremacy explains her determination to foreclose discussions after the EA meeting of 9 December. The need to turn the tide in the battle for public opinion led — by whatever route history may eventually uncover — to the leaking of the Solicitor-General's letter on 6 January.

It was the Prime Minister's attempt to gag Heseltine by insisting at the Cabinet meeting of 9 January that in future he clear all his statements on Westland with the Cabinet Office which finally triggered his resignation. Pressure from Conservative backbenchers forced Leon Brittan to follow Heseltine out of the government, not the requirements of ministerial responsibility. The need to preserve the position of the Prime Minister and not constitutional doctrine led the Conservative majority on the Commons Defence Committee to 'clear' Thatcher.

Naming and blaming the civil servants involved, albeit on a sliding scale of culpability, was done without a moment's pause to consider the conventions of ministerial and official responsibility. 'Procedure', in Sir Kenneth Pickthorn's famous phrase, may be 'all the Constitution the poor Briton has'. But in the Westland affair it provided not one jot of protection or guidance for the system or the people who work in it. The constitution really was reduced to what happened. □

City Syndication

Camera Press

Heseltine was winning the battle of the headlines — so Thatcher and Brittan turned crisis into constitutional catastrophe when they fought back with the leaking of the Solicitor General's letter

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Peter Hennessy is author of Cabinet *(Blackwell, £7.50). An extended version of this article will appear in the next issue of the* Journal of Law and Society.

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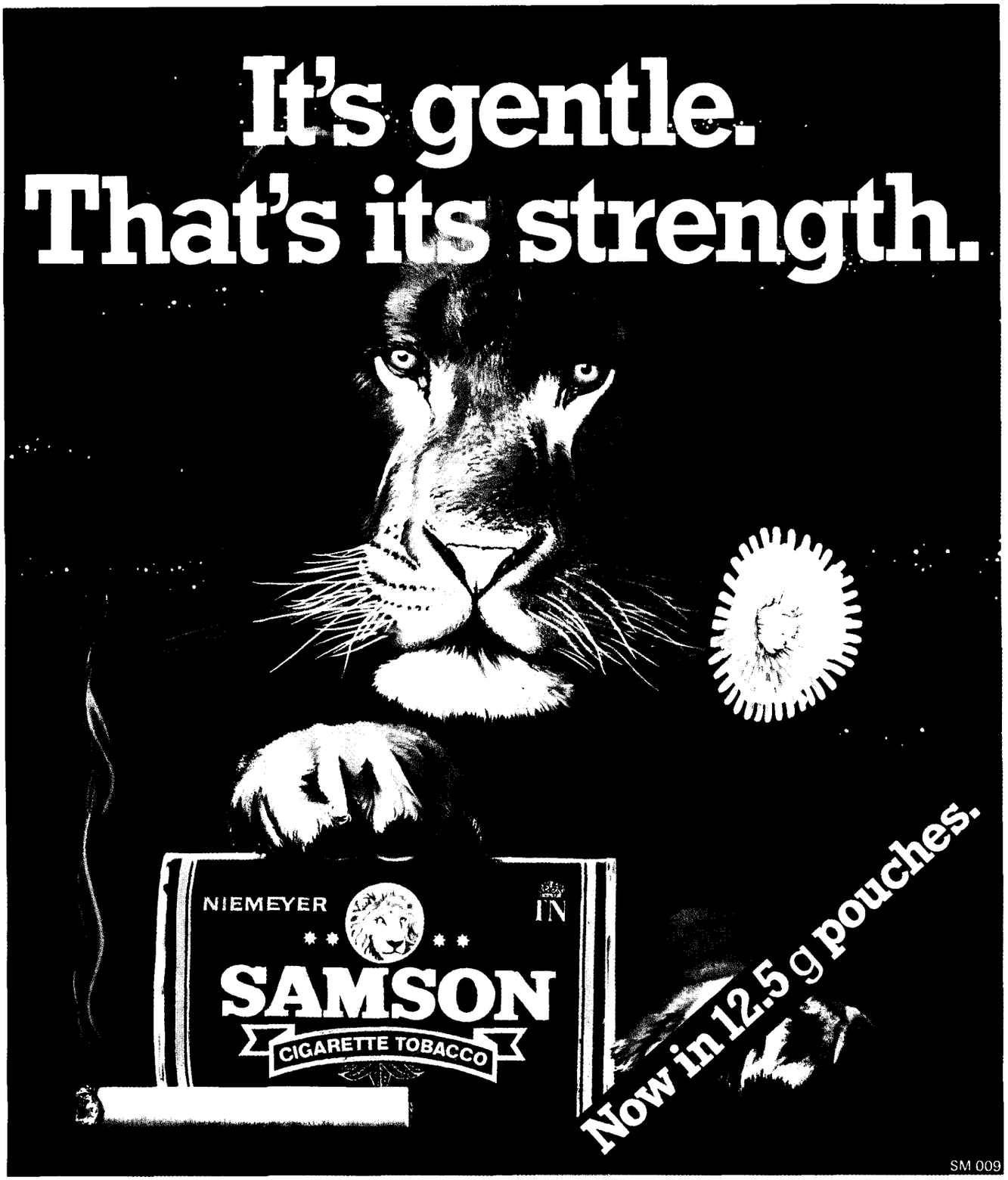

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DISARMAMENT

Gorbachev's new thinking

Camera Press

'New thinking' Gorbachev is trying to change red squares in the military (above: in Red Square)

A deliberate expansion of institutions circumventing the Soviet military's former monopoly on disarmament expertise, and the declared desperate need to overhaul the economy, underlie the 'concessions' at Reykjavik.* NEIL MALCOLM *reports

THE DRAMATIC WAY in which the Reykjavik summit broke up and the recriminations which came after it should not be allowed to distract attention from the distance which was travelled towards an agreement.

Gorbachev made the most of his post-summit media appearances to draw attention to the scale of the Soviet concessions — on verification, on British and French nuclear weapons, on ICBM cuts etc. — not just to demonstrate US unreasonableness but also to stress the *novelty* of his negotiating position. The process of preparing for Reykjavik he declared had been very useful for the Soviet team, because it had enabled them to get rid of trivial obstacles, blockages and stereotypes in their own thinking and to develop new approaches to the problems of arms control.

What exactly does the General Secretary mean when he calls for 'new thinking' in international relations? Where do his new ideas come from and how much lasting impact are they likely to have on Soviet policy? What forces in Soviet society are working for them and what forces are working against them?

The first thing to say is that the 'new thinking' is not all that new. It embodies ideas which have been articulated for many years by a group belonging to the first post-Stalin generation of Party intellectuals. In the 1960s several of them worked under Andropov in the Central Committee apparatus in Moscow. Some went on to head research establishments like the USA Institute or the Institute of the World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO). Others have become leading journalists and Party officials. Now the most eminent of them travel the world in Gorbachev's entourage (Alexander Yakovlev, head of the CPSU propaganda department, Georgii Arbatov, director of the USA Institute), while others play a leading part in interpreting and publicising the new foreign policy.

At the CPSU congress in February, Gorbachev put forward the 'points of principle' of his new thinking quite bluntly. Military might, he stated, is no longer a guarantee of safety: 'to ensure security is a political problem, and it can only be done by political means'. The USSR must be sensitive to the fears and anxieties of the other side, and behave with 'restraint and circumspection' in volatile parts of the world. The international community is increasingly interdependent and faces global problems such as famine and environmental deterioration which can only be solved through global co-operation.

These ideas were publishable during the Brezhnev era but they were frequently drowned out by jingoistic outbursts from defence spokesmen and by incongruously militant rhetoric on Third World issues from the ageing leaders of the CPSU International Department. Now, however, the disastrous decline in US-Soviet relations, setbacks in Africa and Afghanistan, economic problems and the looming military-technological gap have exercised a sobering influence. Foreign policy, it seems to be understood, must be more tightly controlled and bettered focused on the primary goals, namely survival and successful socio-economic competition with the West (and the East).

New ideas about foreign affairs and about how to manage them need new institutions. Anatoly Dobrynin has been recalled from the Washington Embassy to replace the conservative Ponomaryov as head of the Party International Department, which appears to have been recast as a top level co-ordinating centre for foreign policy. Like the Foreign Ministry it has recently acquired an arms control department which is headed by a senior military arms control specialist. This is important because it weakens the military monopoly on disarmament expertise. IMEMO has also established a new Department of Disarmament and Security which will encourage the expansion of the as yet miniscule team of civilian arms control experts.

BUT THE PRESENCE of new ideas and the new institutions are no guarantee that the corresponding new policies will be put into practice. For one thing the old ideas and old institutions are still in place.

For over half a century the Soviet leadership has made it an article of faith that the only path to national security is to put everything that can be spared into building up a strong defence capability. The armed forces have enjoyed consistent high status, privileges in equipment supply and a dominant voice in national security decision making. And there have been signs of restiveness with the new 'political' foreign policy line. The Chief of General Staff, Marshall Akhromeev, has quite openly stated his misgivings about prolonging the unilateral nuclear test ban moratorium, and there have been rumblings in the military press about budget cuts.

> ***'Gorbachev's strength is that he speaks for ideas whose time has come. His colleagues share a common perception of economic crises caused by inefficiencies . . . opening to the West has become a military priority too'***

It would be a mistake, however, to overestimate the capacity of the defence bureaucracy to resist change in current circumstances. The Party

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leadership has always kept the military under strict control and it has lost political standing and probably influence in recent years. In 1973 the Head of the KGB and the Defence Minister were both promoted to full membership of the Politburo; now only the KGB retains that privilege. In general the military have behaved compliantly. Akhromeev has unequivocally endorsed the idea, resisted by his predecessor, that nuclear war is unwinnable and has repeatedly committed himself in public to the arms control drive.

Gorbachev's strength is that he speaks for ideas whose time has come. His colleagues share a common perception of economic crises caused by inefficiencies and an inability to reach and maintain world standards in technology. The impending high-tech revolution in weaponry means that arms control and a further opening to the West have become *military* priorities too.

There may be differences of opinion between economic reformers (represented by top advisers like Professor Aganbegyan) and industrial administrators (headed by the Prime Minister, Nikolai Ryzhkov) over how exactly economic modernisation is to be brought about, and over the balance between enhancing central control and encouraging 'socialist entrepreneurship'. But none of them would dispute that continuing restrictions on East-West trade and technology transfers and an accelerating drain of resources and manpower into the defence sector would be a crippling obstacle on the whole project. This means that the new thinking on foreign policy will not meet with serious opposition at the top level, where the 'modernisers' have won the agrument, but rather at the middle level of the bureaucracies and among the public as a whole.

Here, Gorbachev faces the same kind of problems he does in forwarding his domestic policies. In order for the latter to succeed he must, as he puts it, change the psychology of the nation — but he must do so without alarming it and stirring up support for potential conservatively-minded rivals. So far he has displayed great caution, balancing his campaign for innovation with an appeal to traditional values such as order and discipline. In this he has been helped by the public's sense of need for change which for the time being makes his dynamic, impatient style a political asset.

Foreign policy innovations are easier to put through in so far as they pose less of a threat to the material interests and privileges of most of the population than changes in the economic system. There is no doubt, however, that the 'struggle for peace' enjoys widespread popularity. Complaints during the 1970s from the Armed Forces Main Political Administration about the spreading of 'pacifist ideas' no doubt reflected real worries among those responsible for maintaining military morale and fighting spirit.

ON THE OTHER hand it must be remembered that the Soviet regime has derived enormous credit with its people over the last 15 years from the USSR's emergence, thanks to its military strength, as a super power able to treat with the United States on equal terms.

In a way public expectations about the Soviet Union's role in the world have been raised dangerously high and it is a tricky task to lower them. This is one reason why the leadership has set particular store by the outward signs of international status and legitimacy, and why it is particularly sensitive about such matters as the observance of treaties. Gorbachev knows that there is a balance to be maintained in foreign policy too — he must avoid the danger of being manoeuvred into a humiliating or inferior positon and he must maintain strict reciprocity when it comes to the expulsion of diplomats and journalists.

If he is ever tempted to lose sight of this factor that section of the Party apparatus which is responsible for 'ideology' and for guiding public opinion, and which is represented in the inner circle of the Politburo by Yegor Ligachov, will be at his shoulder to remind him.

Soviet journalists and academic writers spent the period leading up to the Reykjavik meeting educating the Soviet public in the need for flexibility in international affairs. Vitaly Zhurkin, a deputy director of the USA Institute, appeared in the 'Studio 9' current affairs programme on Moscow television arguing that people were wrong to complain that the USSR was surrendering position after position in the strategic arms talks. It is the essence of negotiation, he explained, that the two sides start some distance apart then move step by step towards a compromise.

This is a message that the Soviet viewers can understand. What poses more of a problem is when the other side is uncertain even whether it wants to negotiate at all. It helps Gorbachev to win his internal political arguments if the 'momentum' (one of his favourite words) can be kept up as well. The implementation of new tactics is having its effect both in western Europe and in the United States, but it is still the old thinking which predominates there. It is time the West understood that there is something new coming out of Moscow and that it can be made to last. □

A squeeze on Europe

PHIL WILLIAMS *estimates that Reykjavik has left the Atlantic Alliance the prey of the 'Squeezers' in Washington*

ONE OF the most obvious perils of summit meetings is that they demand success. It is not entirely surprising, therefore, that in the aftermath of the Reykjavik meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev there have been some imaginative exercises in semantics.

Both success and failure have been redefined as the super powers launch intense campaigns to win the hearts and minds of the West Europeans. Soviet spokesmen have blamed lack of agreement on Reagan's unwillingness to countenance serious restraint on the development and testing associated with the Strategic Defence Initiative. Americans by contrast have emphasised that the Summit led to movement on issues which had hitherto been stalled, and was therefore a greater success than could have been produced at the outset.

The United States interpretation — as well as President Reagan's strong stand on Star Wars (SDI) — has won firm backing from the NATO governments. After briefing the West European allies, Secretary of State Shultz seemed much happier than in the immediate aftermath of the

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summit. To outsiders the NATO meeting was an impressive display of unity and one which suggested that the Soviet attempt to blame Reagan for the impasse in arms control negotiations would evoke little response.

Appearances can be deceptive, however, and the long term consequences for the Atlantic Alliance of the Reykjavik meeting could prove far more damaging than seemed likely in the week following the summit. Much, of course, depends on the Geneva negotiations themselves, and here the Soviet Union has been remarkably skilful. Moscow's announcement that it will negotiate an agreement on intermediate nuclear forces (INF) in Europe, but will only sign it as part of a comprehensive package which includes restrictions on SDI, firmly establishes the Star Wars project as the major obstacle to arms control in Europe. Skilful Soviet diplomacy could therefore lead to considerable European pressure on the Reagan administration to be more forthcoming.

Much depends on the constellation of political forces in Washington. Since 1984 there has been a continuing battle for the soul of the second Reagan administration — between conservative pragmatists, anxious to work out a deal with Moscow, and conservative ideologues who prefer to squeeze the Soviet Union to the point where it suffers internal collapse. The 'dealers' see negotiated agreement as the path to a safer world whereas the aim of the 'squeezers' is to promote American security by bringing about the decline and fall of an 'Evil Empire'.

Much of the debate between the two groups has centred around SDI. The 'dealers', led by Secretary Shultz, have emphasised the limits of American power in the face of budget and trade deficits. They have also acknowledged continued Soviet ability to compete effectively in a prolonged arms race. The 'squeezers' in contrast see the American technological advantage as decisive, and believe that by going ahead with SDI the United States can compel Moscow to engage in an arms race which will have a profoundly debilitating effect on the Soviet economy.

Even if SDI does not provide the 'Astrodome' desired by President Reagan it can still, for 'squeezers' determine the future of Soviet-American relations. Consequently, the initiative has support from hard-liners who may have little faith in their president's concept as a technology, but see considerable tactical value in SDI as a means of pressuring the Russians and preventing arms control.

Part of the significance of Reykjavik was that although Shultz was clearly the President's dominant adviser, he was unable to persuade Reagan to make significant concessions on SDI. Unless the President has a change of heart, which seems unlikely, the 'squeezers' in the administration remain in a strong position.

THE IMPLICATIONS for Atlantic relations are serious. The most immediate effects are likely to be felt within Europe itself. The Iceland summit has sharpened and polarised the defence debate throughout Europe, most especially in the Federal Republic of Germany and in Britain.

In the first place, it has underlined once again Western Europe's dependence on the super powers for its security. One of the most unpalatable aspects of the summit was that European security issues were once again being decided over the heads of the Europeans: the distance from Yalta to Reykjavik is very small. If existing governments accept this as a fact of life in Europe, albeit an uncomfortable one, the summit seems likely to strengthen the impulse on the left of European politics for disengagement from the super power competition — in practical terms, disengagement from the United States.

Second, by going beyond his brief and engaging in what appears to have been the most cavalier arms control negotiations ever conducted, Reagan allowed Gorbachev to raise the stakes. Where the benefits of success are so large penalties for failure are also inflated. As a result Reagan may have offered SDI as a target for the peace movement and opposition parties in Western Europe in a way that was less obvious before the summit.

Indeed, SDI has been an issue on which the differences between critics and governments have hitherto been limited if not exactly muted. Although the British and West German governments participate in SDI research they have serious reservations about the development and deployment of ballistic missile defences, and have hedged their involvement with restrictive agreements intended to protect the ABM Treaty of 1972. In the months ahead, however, it seems likely that governments will feel compelled to close ranks on SDI, and in public at least, swallow their reservations. Opposition parties, not under the same obligations, will focus on SDI as an obstacle to arms control, thereby adding another divisive element to the defence debate.

Third — and closely related — by holding out the prospect of the withdrawal of all cruise missiels and Pershing 2s from Western Europe as part of an INF deal, Reagan has upset his allies on the right in Europe as well as his critics on the left. Both the Thatcher and Kohl governments dislike the zero option because it removes missiles in Europe which are essential to the coupling that renders an American nuclear guarantee credible, while doing nothing about the shorter range Soviet missiles, the SS-21s, SS-22s and SS-23s. The military dislike it because it robs flexible response of some of the options that are essential if NATO strategy is to retain its effectiveness.

The dominant reaction among these groups is one of relief that agreement was not reached. For the parties of the left Reykjavik is a tragically missed opportunity. By being more flexible the United States could have accomplished much that would have pleased the centre and left in Western Europe. Instead, Reagan enabled Gorbachev to re-open the bitterly fought INF issue in a way that was hardly conceivable before the summit.

Equally, Reagan has done little for those governments and politicians in Europe who are his closest political allies. Both Mrs Thatcher and Chancellor Kohl will find it increasingly difficult to argue that the Reagan strategy of negotiating from strength brings resuls. Privately both will exert pressure on the administration to make concessions on SDI, while also arguing for an INF deal which permits the retention of something like 100 cruise missiles and Pershing 2s in Europe. In public they will feel compelled to support President Reagan against what is seen as Gorbachev's attempts to drive wedges between the US and its NATO allies. □

NEWS

Women uncover a UK 'holocaust' HQ

THE GREENHAM COMMON women's break-in protest to a Henley-on-Thames underground military headquarters has yielded details of the exact site where Britain's equivalent of a crisis military *junta* — the UK Commanders-in-Chief Committee — would operate, according to copies of maps and documents passed to the *New Statesman*.

A well-furnished GOC's (General Officer Commanding) suite also gave the women a bizarre glimpse of how one military top dog may be living, come another holocaust. The bunker, at Temple Combe near Henley, is about the size and shape of a small London underground station and had until 1980 been the home of a local engineering firm. Originally built in the Second World War, the bunker ceased to be on the secret list in the 1960s. Indeed, plans could then be purchased from the Public Records Office.

Five years ago, the army reclaimed the site for military use, put up new fences and signs, and announced that it was a 'training area'. Local residents had been unable to discover the purpose of new construction works. The womens' protest raid has solved that mystery. Temple Combe, known to the military as Bowsey Hill, has now become '6AFHQ', or Number 6 Armed Forces Headquarters — the emergency military command centre for most of the south east of England. It is the wartime equivalent of the army's major HQ at Aldershot.

This HQ would thus be the military control centre for all of the South East, from Hampshire to Kent, reaching as far as Buckinghamshire in the North. A separate military control centre has been set up for the London area, in Beaconsfield. The general normally in charge of Aldershot (who in war would be known as the Regional Military Commander) had his own personal lavatory. Lietenant General Sir Michael Gray also had an ample-sized bunker bedroom which was carpeted, furnished with a double bed, leather chairs and other luxury furniture, including an antique table, which appeared to have been recently French-polished. The women painted anti-war slogans on it.

The documents show that Gray's underground fortress is linked to RAF Strike Command at High Wycombe, a Royal Navy HQ at Fort Southwick, Portsmouth, and the Home Office's 'zone headquarters' in Basingstoke. The most important item found, however, was a telephone list referring to the War HQ of UK Land Forces. This would be the top level military HQ for the UK, and would oversee naval and air force activities, as well as army operations. This headquarters will be at Sopley, a small village north of Bournemouth.

Duncan Campbell

Some ambiguity may have been created by the announcement two weeks ago that Media columnist Duncan Campbell was heading for the London Daily News. *That Duncan Campbell formerly worked for* City Limits *magazine; the* NS*'s Duncan Campbell (above) has been absent preparing six programmes for the new BBC2 series,* Secret Society, *and will be back writing for the* NS *shortly.*

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ECONOMICS

Shares for the poor while the rich cut and run for Tokyo

Haydn Shaughnessy

A NEW SENSE of morality about the nation's economic affairs, a new moral aura, seems to be forming. Hence this magazine can assert that the public mood, along with many of the public's industries, is now privatised. Hence the Labour Party adopts a policy which allows some room for limited personal share ownership in the companies it plans to take back into the 'public' fold.

The trouble with this concession, of course, is its measliness. It is transparently a palliative rather than a policy. And some palliative! It threatens to foreclose on opportunities which many people are just beginning to sense might be theirs.

But there's a problem with the concept of a now privatised public mood. Privatisation is a politician's policy, not a philosophical disposition. So why have opponents of the government begun to believe in it? Well, it's been said often enough of Mrs Thatcher that she has a knack of getting the public mood right. Her government privatises, the public don't seem to mind; therefore the public mood is . . .

To put this reasoning to the test I don the mantle of the common man, put my hands in my pockets and wander the streets of Manchester inviting thoughts, both private and neo-liberal. Like an eastern mystic I try to absorb the new thoughts through the nostrils. Two deep breaths on King St West. But no joy. Not even strolling past the Gas showroom does the mood infiltrate me.

Untouched by the privatised part of the ether I conclude that the public mood is not after all any more private than it's ever been. Glancing at the new restaurants and night clubs and the now familiar BMWs parked outside them, I conclude instead that the mood is one of understandable and even laudable self-interest.

People want a slice of the action. They want opportunities: little opportunities to make extra money; medium sized ones — perhaps to own a home; big ones — to get on in life. Privatisation offers an opportunity. It is not a creed; merely a manifestation of the general lack of opportunities in society. The self-interested individual wants to see this social problem rectified. The politicians offer to do it by revitalising economic growth. The individual can still be convinced that economic growth is an answer. One party promises to achieve it through old fashioned expansion and redistribution policies — coupled with the promise of a socialist yuppyism which, like the lion tamer, offers to free the individual within the confines of a cage.

The other party offers a vision of growth stimulated by a new share-owning democracy which each individual can contribute to and benefit from on his or her own terms. Dreams like this allow the Chancellor of the Exchequer to keep his credibility intact despite an appalling summer

> ***'Privatisation is not a creed, merely a manifestation of the general lack of opportunities in society'***

for the British economy. Party one needs to do some quick thinking in order to catch up with party two. It has until the next budget when the Chancellor will undoubtedly announce more opportunities for the individual to take a share of the country's wealth.

A TRULY RADICAL MIND would start by challenging both parties' pre-occupation with economic growth as a means of fulfilling individual aspirations. In the absence of real radicalism, the thought process should start with the government's monthly financial statistics.

These show that the general public is far from endorsing the new democratic dawn. In fact the personal investor is getting rid of his or her stake in Britain at an alarming rate. Last year there was a net selling off of shares by the personal sector of some £3 billions. The year before that, the year of Telecom, the sell off was in excess of £4 billions. The figures are susceptible to error, of course. But the trend over the years is so dramatic and consistent that it can't be dismissed as a statistical aberration.

Why then should people on the left rush to endorse the view that there is now a 'privatised' mentality? One reason is the very large increase in people expressing an interest in share issues. But this is no great surprise. Issues like Telecom, TSB, and British Gas, are made so attractive that anybody with a small amount to invest would be a fool not to be interested. I myself borrowed £500 to buy TSB shares, sold them on the first morning and made £250 profit, all for one hour's work. It wasn't an ideological sea-change that made me do this, honest guv'. I needed the money. And the opportunity was there.

The biggest losers in the big share flotations tend to be the building societies and they are quite philosophical about people like me. They know there has been a general raising of the public's awareness of financial matters. It preceded the share-owning boom and was brought about by increased competition amongst the building societies, and between the building societies and the banks. The new share issues have been floated on the back of that development.

The new sophistication means that people with small sums are now much more likely to view their money as investments rather than savings. The consequences of this simple change of attitude are profound. They certainly mean that a future Labour manifesto has to be more imaginative about providing investment opportunities.

The Tory government however has to do much more than this. The essence of a share-owning democracy is not only that people have an opportunity to make money on shares. People must also be prepared to lose money. Those who have taken part in the big new issues have yet to face this down side of the new democracy. Companies such as Telecom and TSB are either quasi monopolists or market leaders. Investing in them has been as safe as depositing in a building society. But that may soon change. Values on the London Stock Exchange are reaching a plateau. Risk is beginning to set in.

That is one explanation for the recent bout of selling. Ironically, as the new small investor is attracted into the stock market by the general increase in awareness, that same awareness of opportunity is driving the more experienced investor out. Last year, according to CSO figures, the personal investor diverted over £2 billions abroad. That's ten times higher than in 1984.

Add to that the £6 billion raised by British companies in this country and then invested abroad and you have a significant contribution to the destabilising of our economy.

THESE FIGURES ought to embarrass the government. They point to a mass desertion by the country's economic leaders — those whom we can reasonably assume to be the government's natural supporters. Yet the last eight years have been particularly good for those wealthy share owners.

Values on the London Stock Exchange have increased rapidly over this period. Anybody with a half decent portfolio should have been achieving growth rates of about 20 per cent per annum. That means a modest fortune of about £20,000 in 1979 would be worth over £50,000 now. In 1986 that fortune should be growing at over £10,000 a year — in other words it should be growing by more

> ***'I myself borrowed £500 to buy TSB shares, sold them on the first morning, and made £250 profit, all for one hour's work'***

than the average yearly wage. A less modest fortune of £100,000 will be growing at more than twice the average national wage.

These spectacular gains on the London Stock Exchange are coming to an end. The markets in Germany and Japan look a safer and more profitable bet. Therefore wealth has already begun to cut and run.

This is so derisory of the government's democratic aims, that the Labour Party should not lose the chance to . . . er . . . capitalise on it. A share-owning democracy is a call to patriotism which the less well off heed and the better off ignore.

It's an extraordinary failure on the part of the Labour Party not to challenge this hypocrisy. A few new exciting and relatively risk-free ideas for the small investor would help their case. On the other hand the party could eschew the small details and embark on a fundamental reappraisal of the socialist's attitude towards the individual — if they don't do this now, they will have to do it in preparation for the election of 1992. □

Haydn Shaughnessy is a freelance journalist based in Manchester. See also Peter Gillman p18.

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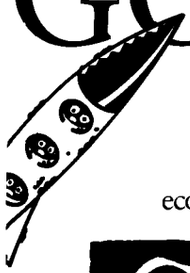

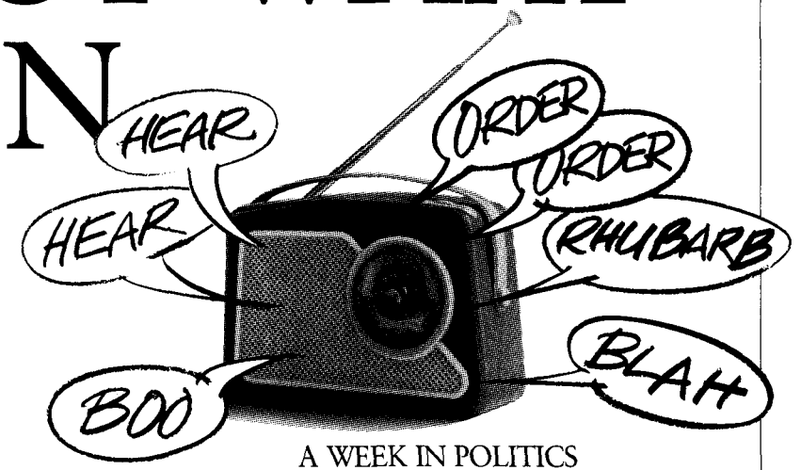

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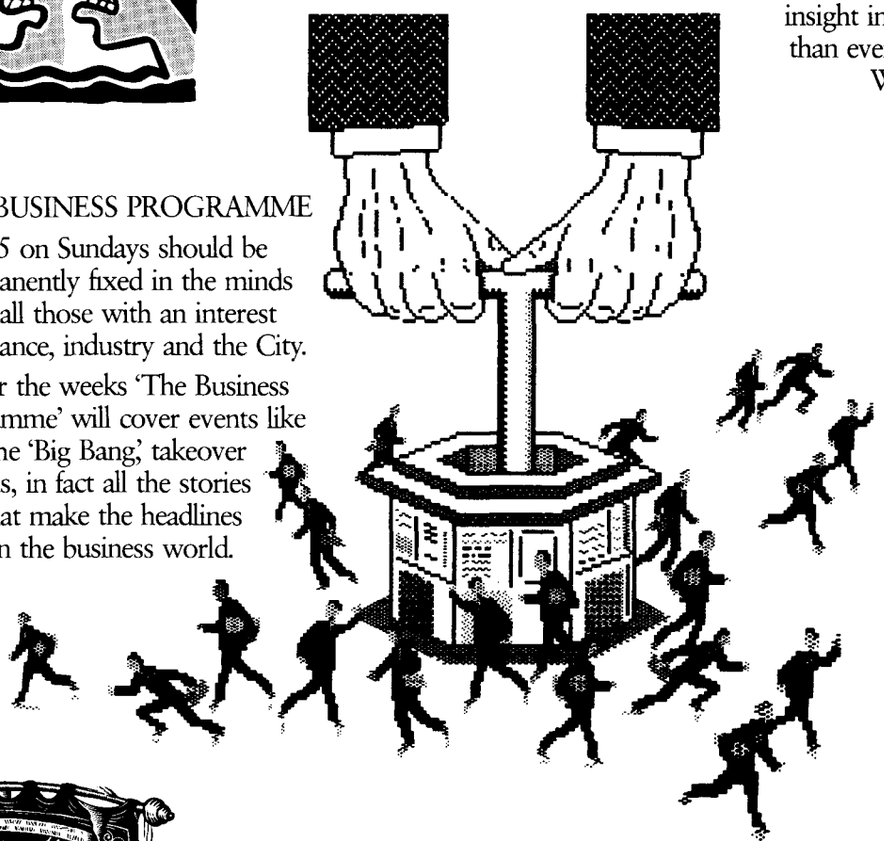

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THAT'S CAPITALISM

Laughter on x2611 — did it serve us right?

PETER GILLMAN ***and family swallowed their doubts and thought they'd be quids in on the TSB float. There was just one thing they hadn't considered . . .***

IT SERVES us right, I suppose, for applying for TSB shares in the first place. When British Telecom was floated we turned down the chance of playing no-lose roulette on straight ideological grounds: no right-thinking socialist would profit from selling off public assets, etc. We later learned of a more pragmatic friend who had spent half his profits on wine and given the other half to the PLO.

When the latest phase of Thatcher's popular capitalism was launched we therefore had a careful rethink. There was of course that dispute over who the TSB belonged to in the first place: since both our sons had TSB accounts it seemed that if anyone owned it, they did. We cast further doubts aside, removed the remains of my *Sunday Times* redundancy money (yes, I got out before Wapping) from our building society account, and applied.

Since this form of gambling was new to us, we studied the fine print of the application form with the same dedication we would devote to reading the racing pages on Derby and Grand National days. We discerned that each of us — myself, my wife Leni, our sons Danny and Seth — were entitled to make one 'public application'.

In addition, as TSB account-holders, Danny and Seth were allowed to make 'customer priority applications'. That made six applications in all. We applied for 1,000 shares on each count, dispatched six cheques for £500 each, and waited, with the same frisson of excitement that comes from watching the two aforementioned horse-races, for the outcome.

THE FIRST OMENS were good. As priority customers, Danny and Seth were guaranteed 500 shares. In addition, each of us — much like a *Reader's Digest* book offer — qualified for the chance of a further 400 shares. The *Guardian*, acting as both tipster and moral mentor, put our chances at evens, adding that there was no shame in selling the shares right away (ie forget all the worthy stuff about sound long-term investments.)

We did our calculations accordingly: *if* two of our four public applications succeeded that would give us 1800 shares and *if* we decided to sell at around 85p each that would give a profit of around £600 which after deducting the lost building society interest should give us about £125 each. Not bad, as even the BBC pointed out, for filling in a set of forms.

No hubris can have been more over-weening. On the morning that five million punters awaited the post from TSB, our four letters carried a terrible message. 'Dear Sir or Madam', they read. 'We have reason to suspect that more than one application has been submitted by you, or on your behalf, and for your benefit . . . ' Although two of our public applications were, in theory, successful, our shares had been withheld and all four of our cheques had been banked. We were asked to provide 'any relevant information . . . in order to investigate this matter further.'

We were baffled and confounded. What on earth had we done wrong? We went over every move we had made, and scoured our consciences too, in vain. Nor did the TSB letter offer any clues as to what their 'reasons to suspect' might be. To prove our innocence we would have to provide every remotely relevant fact we could think of. Thus had Thatcher's New Jerusalem become Franz Kafka land.

WE COMPOSED our response. We described our family genealogy and gave a brief history of Fleet Street. We told how we had scrupulously followed the application procedures and gave the numbers of the six cheques. I admitted that I had voted Labour at the last election but added in mitigation that I had written articles for the *Daily Telegraph* and even the *Financial Times*.

We were also able to point out that Danny and Seth *had* received their 500 shares as TSB customers, encouraging us to believe that whatever we might have done wrong, our sons were being held culpable to a lesser degree. Or could it mean that the army of clerks scouring the application forms for suspicious signs — applications made in ball-point pens, perhaps, or stained with marmalade — were as inefficient as the secret police in the opening sequence of *Brazil*, where a man is nominated for liquidation by a malfunctioning typewriter?

We posted our reply — together with a letter to our bank manager, apologising for the sudden increase in our overdraft — and awaited news of our fate.

Four days passed. Finally I decided it was time to confront our accusers. The TSB letter named something called Peat, Marwick, Mitchell, which I telephoned. I found the person — identifiable only by a telephone extension, number 2611 — who was handling our case and asked why we had been singled out for accusation. An hour later all was revealed. Number 2611 called back and said: 'We don't like your children's names.'

My god! It was true, every word of it, and we confess with all the humility we can summon. Or perhaps we were victims of our environment: I ask you to picture the scene. It was the swinging sixties, when the sun shone all day, and in the evening we would go to watch American *films noirs* and their French imitators at the NFT.

The first of our movie heroes was a certain Humphrey Bogart: and in a moment of rashness so fitting to that age we named our first son Daniel Bogart Gillman.

Two years later, after seeing Jean-Paul Belmondo in *À Bout de Souffle* at least eight times, we called our second son Seth Belmondo Gillman. We have been stricken with remorse ever since and have often told our sons we would not feel offended if they wanted to change their names. Both have protested that they are very fond of their names and would not dream of doing so. But now we had been made to pay.

WITH THE CHILL efficiency of the French police chief in *The Battle of Algiers*, number 2611 told us that our cheques had been banked and our shares withheld because our sons' names resembled those made up by fraudsters in share application cases.

It did not occur to me to protest that had I been a fraudster I would have used names like Norman and Nigel. Instead I apologised for having given our children such foolish names, and before long we began to establish the kind of symbiotic relationship that all interrogators forge with their victims: number 2611 confessed that he was a 'film freak' himself. But he was not prepared to relent. Would we send our children's birth certificates to prove that they existed?

By now I felt that this pantomime had gone too far. I suggested that the TSB should look at its own records instead: since they had already sent Danny and Seth shares as account-holders, it followed with Cartesian rigour that they existed. With not entirely good grace, number 2611 agreed.

We are now waiting for our shares to arrive and are hoping that the stock-market price will have improved during the delay. However, we shall sell our shares at once, for we would not dream of retaining them now. If Thatcher's thought police have decreed that only people with officially approved names can enter her share-owning paradise, we want no part of it. □

ROGER WODDIS

The Y-Front Factor

'The military have become comfortable with their nuclear weapons. It's as though someone is threatening to take away their underwear.' — a senior NATO official

Take, O take those bombs away,
That can never be replaced,
And embarrassed friends will say
We look bare below the waist.
What supports the common will
That we share?
What brings ease to overkill?
Underwear.

Take away those precious pants,
That conceal our naughty bits,
And the world will look askance,
When we try to do the splits.
Zero option, it is clear,
Leaves us nude;
Our defences would appear
Rather rude.

Think of what we might reveal,
If we aped the kilted Scot,
Stepping lively in the reel,
Showing everything he's got.
Let us keep what men of war
Wish to hide:
Weapons as a symbol for
Phallic pride.

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MEDIA

The BBC governors and managers are blunting its cutting edge

John Lloyd

BBC CURRENT AFFAIRS is in trouble, and thus British journalism is in trouble. This is far from unwelcome to the government, though it alone is not responsible for the state of affairs.

The justification for linking BBC current affairs to the state of British journalism is partly its sheer scope. On television, *Panorama, Newsnight, This Week Next Week, Question Time, That's Life, Rough Justice, Watchdog* and special documentaries are current or recent regulars: on radio, *Today, World at One, PM, World This Weekend, Analysis, Checkpoint*, and *its* special documentaries are their sound equivalents. Some of these programmes, or some parts of them sometimes, are challenging; from time to time they probe deeper than the day's phenomena; occasionally, they mount a large investigation and produce a wholly new set of facts and connections previously hidden.

They are not alone, of course. Indeed, Granada's *World in Action*, followed by Thames's *This Week*, can fairly claim to have a more consistent record in investigative journalism than most, maybe all, BBC programmes; *Weekend World* is at least as good at quizzing the powerful; Yorkshire and Central produce powerful documentaries from time to time (the latter also makes the addictive *Spitting Image*); Scottish Television is busy beefing up its current affairs output. But they cannot match the quantity nor at times the quality. If BBC current affairs falters, if it loses its cutting edge, the pressure is off.

And not just off independent television. Newspapers are not now as interested as they were in investigations: most notably, the *Sunday Times* Insight logo is used rarely, and usually for short-winded stories: the daily newspapers, with the partial exception of the *Guardian*, do nothing in that line: only the *Observer* keeps, in David Leigh and his colleagues, an investigative presence which is consistent and hard. *The Independent*, a good newspaper on early evidence, did not see any need to announce it was setting up an Insight-type team to flesh out its coverage: ten years ago, it would have done.

The BBC's pace-setting pressure is coming off because of a number of factors, and it is difficult to say which is more important. First, the BBC has lost, or still faces, some very expensive legal challenges. It had to pay out over £1m to a Dr Gee 18 months ago when he claimed he was libelled on *That's Life*. Anne Fitzpatrick, the 'chief witness' of a *Rough Justice* programme last year, is presently claiming $17m for loss of earnings and invasion of privacy. Most BBC journalists still regard the BBC's handling of that last episode as shameful. The programme's producers, Peter Hill, and a reporter, Martin Young, were suspended for three months because Lord Chief Justice Lane disapproved at length, in court, of their interviewing techniques — without a shred of evidence that their procedures had violated any guidelines, or the law.

Now, the board of governors has decided not to continue to fight a libel case brought against *Panorama* by two Tory MPs, Neil Hamilton and Gerald Howarth: the programme, broadcast in February 1984, alleged links between the two and extreme right-wing groups. Hamilton has admitted in court that he attended, in 1972, a rally of the Italian neo-fascist movement, MSI: admitted that he gave a Nazi salute in 1983, in Berlin: but denied he had described himself as a fraternal delegate to the MSI, and claimed he gave the salute as a joke. The BBC's dropping of the case has not been copied by Phil Pedley, chairman of the Young Conservatives in 1982/84 who appeared in the *Panorama* film: Pedley, against whom the two MPs have also taken suit, will continue to defend the action. A number of those closely connected with the case in the BBC believe that the management board's decision to cut and run was inspired by the board of governors because the latter were windy over government pressure. The result has been — as in the *Rough Justice* case — that the BBC is branding its own reporters as careless or even mendacious.

UNDER THE chairmanship of the late Stuart Young (when the vice-chairman, and a dominant figure, was Sir William Rees-Mogg), the governors gave in to government pressure to ban the *Real Lives* documentary portraits of two Northern Irish paramilitaries on opposing sides of the sectarian divide. The decision not to fight Hamilton and Howarth, soon after the assumption of the chair by 'Duke' Hussey (with Lord (Joel) Barnett as his vice chairman), appears to be an early pointer to a similar wish to be accommodating to the government.

> ***'Bit by bit, the climate which holds investigative journalism to be boring or past its prime gains general acceptance'***

There is another explanation, which some in current affairs believe. That is, that the internal checks on the *Panorama* programme, including an internal enquiry by Alasdair Milne, the BBC's director general which described the research as 'rock solid', were faulty and that the BBC should never have attempted to defend. On this case, the governors were wise, if tardy, in getting out: the case is bolstered by pointing to a speech Barnett made last week in which he, alone of governors or senior management, defended his corporation against charges of political bias now being orchestrated into a crescendo by Tory leaders, especially Norman Tebbit, the party leader, and the right-wing papers. In this version, there is hope that Hussey and Barnett can stand up for the BBC against the government.

Yet even those who prefer this cock-up to conspiracy *also* believe that the senior managers — especially Bill Cotton, the BBC TV managing director — have no sympathy for investigative or critical journalism, and no stomach for a fight with a government intent on softening up the corporation. Senior current affairs people — no one will be named in an affair like this — express real pessimism over the BBC's ability to beat back a political assault which seems at times to comprehend everything from the boldest investigation to the less than sycophantic question.

This lack of sympathy, coupled with the continuing squeeze on BBC finances, means that the resources needed for investigative journalism are not routinely available. The BBC TV hierarchy distrusts the pretensions of reporters who demand three months or more to research a programme: and while the criteria are financial, the assumptions behind the denial of the money are that the result is not likely to be worth the trouble.

Such reporting *does* cause trouble. It does often provoke legal action, it does take a long time, there is no sure way of separating out the reporter who malingers for months from the one who needs the time — investigative journalists often show signs of being obsessive and sometimes their obsessions rule them. Further, those who are the object of such reporting often defend themselves by alleging political bias on the part of the reporters and producers as the motive for undertaking the investigation — and since most such journalism is, or should be, concerned with the excesses of power, it is inevitable that the object should frequently be the government of the day.

So the word goes out that reporters will not earn their stars doing this sort of programme. Those who offend the code, like the *Rough Justice* team, are punished — in that case, many were redeployed to *Breakfast Time*, known within the BBC as 'The Drag' (after the position taken at the back of the herd by the cowboy who draws the short straw and ends up covered in dust).

And the word goes out, too, beyond the BBC to the ruling bodies of other TV companies. If they are not, presently, under attack from government they *are* constrained by profit considerations. To be able to point to the publicly owned broadcast organisation as support for a reluctance to engage in the troubles of investigation is a powerful prop: and bit by bit, the climate which holds such journalism to be 'boring' or 'past its prime' gains general acceptance. The bright young reporters gravitate to City journalism, sniggering as they go at the paunchy middle-aged investigators who grumble of better times.

The central concern about the BBC's present plight is that it will blunt the cutting edge of its journalism because its governors and bosses do not understand the issues enough to fight for them, either against politicians or accountants. The public interest in a democracy is best served by journalism which can expose and deflate. When it is frightened off it fails the public in order to please its rulers. Those on the right — as Paul Johnson in the *Spectator* and much else — who attack the BBC, either fail to see they are encouraging a dangerous conformity or wish to encourage just such a conformity. The Corporation's journalism needs defending. □

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The Ruskin row: free speech and solidarity

David Selbourne, a lecturer at the union-backed Ruskin College in Oxford, has, by writing an article in* The Times *last March, sparked off an academic and political row which saw his lectures boycotted: he has now left Ruskin amid a gathering storm.* PAUL HIRST, *Professor of Politics at Birkbeck College, tackles the issue

DAVID SELBOURNE does not want for defenders. His case has been ably presented by Hugo Young in the *Guardian* and Kenneth Baker is apparently taking an active interest in the affair. The Ruskin College response has been conditioned by an impending court case. John Hughes, the College Principal, has kept silence and left it to members of the College staff to reply in a private capacity. These replies are evasive and unconvincing: they amount to saying that Selbourne is an awkward customer who has refused a sensible compromise and has carried the affair beyond its natural life.

The tone is surprising, especially as Raphael Samuel, a fellow Ruskin lecturer, has been the main protagonist. It amounts to singing the praises of those uniquely British virtues of compromise and fudge. Faced with the danger of an issue of principle, one elevates 'reasonableness' to the supreme virtue, and hopes everyone will temporize long enough to forget what they were fighting about. A TUC bureaucrat might well wish to act like this — hoping in time people will forget there is a man called Hammond, a union called the EETPU (electricians' union) and a place called Wapping — but no one committed to socialism, to the labour movement and to critical knowledge can afford to.

No one can pretend Ruskin's dilemma is an easy one. The College is faced with a genuine clash between a virtue and a principle, the solidarity and anger of its students who represent the best of the labour movement, and the insistence by David Selbourne on his right to free speech and on the special need for that right on the part of a teacher in higher education. It is easy to say that both are right, or that Selbourne has been provocative and abused a right. Selbourne *has* been provocative, as I can testify having thrown his book, *Against Socialist Illusion* (Macmillan Press, 1984), against a far from illusory wall. But a right to free speech is a right to *be* provocative (although not a right to be seditious, or to foment racial hatred).

The problem is that Ruskin brings together two things that are normally quite distinct — higher education and the labour movement — in what has hitherto been a highly creative and productive way. Unions depend on the solidarity of their members and the support of working people generally, and that solidarity involves an element of coercion. Solidarity depends on making some people do what they would rather not do — go on strike, for example. We can pretend that this is not so, that it is all a matter of free assent by sovereign individuals, but without a *measure* of coercion even large majorities in democratic ballots cannot make union action effective.

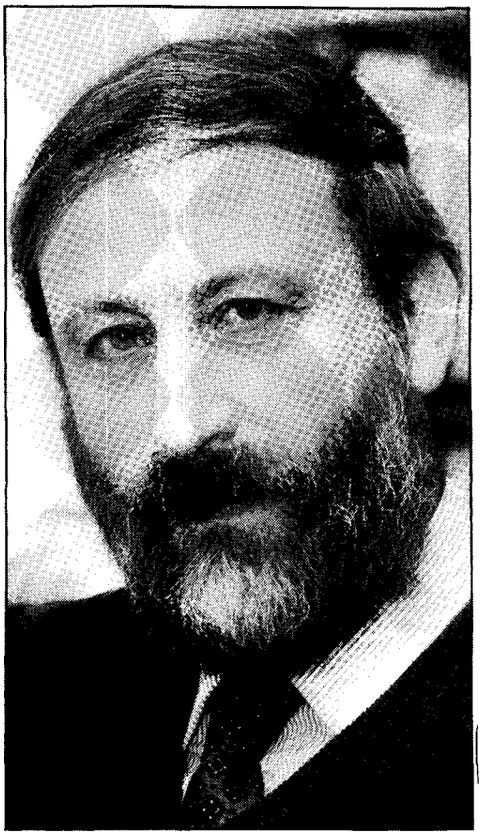
There is blatant and unjustified coercion, there is the messy middle ground and there is the necessary minimum without which a genuine virtue — workers' solidarity — would cease to exist. The issue at Ruskin stems from the students trying to behave as workers demanding solidarity, and the issue doesn't change its character if the action amounted to, as one side says, ugly intimidation, or to, as the other side says, a mild form of picketing distorted by Selbourne's paranoia.

Ultimately higher education does depend on a right to free enquiry and free expression on the part of its teachers. Without this, education is the diffusion of received opinion or approved knowledge determined by government, management, colleagues, students or the general public. It does not matter whether the institution is called a 'university', 'polytechnic', or 'college'. The principle must apply if the aim is critical enquiry and the dissemination of knowledge, without regard to fear or favour.

NO HIGHER education teacher should be sacked without 'good cause' if this principle is to have any meaning — 'good cause' means demonstrable incompetence, a serious crime, incapacitating illness or insanity. 'Good cause' can never mean 'bringing the college into disrepute' — a ground for dismissal recently adopted at Ruskin with the support of the local branch of the Association of University Teachers — any more than it can mean being 'redundant' because the authorities disapprove of the subject one teaches or because the government has decided to economise on expenditures for higher education.

This right to job security follows from the political, social and intellectual function of higher education in an open society dependent on advanced knowledge. It is not a right that can sensibly be confined to those universities who happen to have contractual tenure and be denied to polytechnic or college lecturers, nor can it sensibly be extended to librarians and administrators as the AUT has argued — as if it were a mere matter of 'condition of service' rather than a right necessary to defend a principle.

The question is not which political virtue is to take a precedent at Ruskin — workers' solidarity or the courage to speak freely against opposition. If posed in this way there is no clear answer. Sometimes the labour movement will silence opponents, not because it is specially intolerant but because it must *fight*. The Labour Party still sings the line 'though cowards flinch and traitors sneer/We'll keep the Red flag flying here' at the end of its annual conference. That spirit can never be wholly absent from the unions or the Labour Party without the death of those institutions.



Guardian

Selbourne: should academic freedom be his right to free speech or his students' right to boycott his lectures?

However, Ruskin's members are not there as union members or socialists,but as teachers and students. Ruskin is not a party school, diffusing received opinion. It is a college for mature students who have been workers, its purpose is to offer them higher education. Its job is to teach not merely a certain stock of knowledge, but the values and methods necessary to its acquisition and extension. One would expect students and teachers to be committed to those values as a condition of doing their job, just as workers should be committed to solidarity in defending their own jobs.

The labour movement needs solidarity but it also needs critical knowledge and institutions committed to defend and disseminate it. A world in which received opinion is all will not favour free trade unions: the prevailing opinion will depend on those who have the wealth to broadcast them or have the authority to enforce them.

No one has yet dared to say David Selbourne is a bad teacher, or that he forced his opinions upon his students. I am sure they would be drowned by the praise of his ex-students if they did so. Selbourne has written in *The Times*: he has broken a union demand for solidarity (in company with many others,it must be said). No one can prevent his students and colleagues expressing their disapproval of this action. But they in turn cannot prevent him from teaching in consequence of it.

Ruskin's failure unequivocally to defend the principles of free enquiry and the consequent principle of free speech for its teachers is the worst lesson it has taught its students since its inception. It devalues them and it devalues what it has to offer them. □

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DIET POKE

So, is she wrong?

HAYDN SHAUGHNESSY

investigates Edwina's gaffe

FOR A DEFERENTIAL race of people, the British can get very uppity when they think they're being told what to do. They're even worse when they think they're being criticised . . . Enter Edwina Currie, the new Health Minister.

Northerners, she says, die younger because they smoke and drink too much and they eat the wrong things. In other words, they don't look after themselves properly. Enter indignant of Darlington: 'I come from the North and I'm here to tell you, me and my family do not eat black pudding or drink eight pints of beer a night.'

This comic and senseless scene was repeated several times by the outraged and incensed from Durham down to Derby. Meanwhile Edwina Currie, like Norman Tebbit before her, raised her political profile handsomely above the debris of damaged sensibilities. But unlike Tebbit, Edwina Currie at least talks some sense. Whereas unemployment is relatively impervious to individual initiative, health is much more a matter of personal volition. Enter *World in Action* and Professor Peter Townsend to claim that ill health is a consequence of poverty, not a consequence of bad or ignorant decision-taking by individuals.

The bulk of the evidence for this view comes in Professor Townsend's 'Inequalities in Health in the Northern Region', a study of the poor and prosperous in over 600 northern wards. In this report he demonstrates a very close statistical relationship between low income/manual work, on the one hand, and above average mortality rates on the other. It is, he says, the most substantial body of evidence ever published on poverty and ill health. In it the link seems so well established that one might be tempted to say that ill health is a predetermined and inescapable part of a low paid person's life.

This tendency towards social determinism provoked Currie's outburst in the first place. In the debate that followed her remarks, Peter Townsend's research has been vulgarised even more provocatively and is now read as: 'poverty causes ill health'.

For the most part this is untrue. We live in a society which eats too much of the wrong things and engages daily in a numbing ritual of intoxication. This impoverished culture pervades all social classes and income groups, but as Currie points out it particularly pervades the North. While national brewers have struggled to maintain their traditional popularity, Northern brewers have enjoyed a minor boom.

THE FACT is that Northerners do spend more of their income on alcohol and cigarettes than Southerners do. The actual difference is not great, but as Northerners earn much less than Southerners the proportional difference is substantial.

But take an area which has a level of income roughly equivalent to that of the North — East Anglia. East Anglian households spend about £4 a week less on alcohol and cigarettes. They suffer far less from degenerative diseases generally associated with poor consumption patterns. Death from cancer of the colon in the North is 20 per cent higher than the national average. In East Anglia it's 4 per cent below. Cancer of the lung is about 40 per cent more deadly in the North than it is in East Anglia. The disparity for heart disease is about 32 per cent.

Society bears a heavy cost for some of the individual actions which lie behind these statistics. On consumption patterns in general, however, there is very little data to show where the effects of poverty and other social factors end and the culpability of the individual begins. In an atmosphere of ignorance and indigestion the score is Currie 1 : Determinists 1.

However, two interesting morsels point the way to the eventual outcome of this traditional bout between the collectivists and the individualists.

A study in Manchester shows that low-paid people have a surprisingly high awareness of what constitutes a healthy meal. Yet 85 per cent of these people said that the main meal of the day was not complete without meat. Here is a clear case of custom overriding common sense. No modern dietician recommends a daily intake of red meat, certainly not the cheap fatty meats that low-paid people buy.

Second, there is Professor Townsend's own study which, he says, shows that diseases of affluence are disappearing. Diseases which were previously attributed to good living now fall more heavily on the poor than on the rich. In other words the better-off are adapting themselves to a healthier regime. Those who already live the good life are making sure they enjoy it that little bit longer. □

THINK BLACK

Towards an ofay Europe

DENIS MacSHANE ***sees the media panic over Asian visitors at Heathrow in a European context***

KEEP EUROPE WHITE seems the new motto of a growing number of conservative governments in Western Europe. Last weekend's brutal expulsion of a hundred blacks from France — they were beaten and handcuffed to aeroplane seats on a specially chartered flight back to Mali — is confirmation of a Eurowide initiative aimed at harassing black refugees, immigrants and visitors.

Item: In December 1985, the Swiss government expelled 56 black refugees to Zaire. They were herded aboard a chartered Swissair DC-10 and flown back to Kinshasa where they were handed over to President Mobutu's security police. On board the plane they were beaten up by the Zurich police accompanying them — a fact revealed by police from Geneva who were also on board. The operation was organised by Elizabeth Kopp, Switzerland's first woman cabinet minister. It was aimed at Switzerland's growing sanctuary movement in which churches were hiding refugees, especially Sri Lankans fleeing from Third World persecution. Mobutu complained that instead of real political opponents the Swiss had sent back only 'riff-raff' — so this summer Frau Kopp obliged by expelling the leader of Zaire's opposition who had been a refugee in Switzerland for ten years.

Item: In July the West German government opened up special camps for Third World refugees arriving via East Berlin and claiming political asylum. The camps, rough-tented accommodation, were set up in recreation areas of working-class districts of West Berlin and local anti-immigrant feeling was whipped up by right-wing extremists. The object of the ruling conservatives was to change the German constitution which guarantees the right of asylum to anyone who arrives on West German territory claiming political persecution. A campaign to amend the constitution was launched by followers of Franz-Josef Strauss and it needed a massive counter-campaign by unions, the churches, the SPD and the cultural intelligentsia to stay the government's hand.

Item: In September, in France, the Chirac government introduced a law permitting the administrative expulsion by the police of anyone not in possession of appropriate papers. No appeal to judical process is allowed. In addition, after a wave of terrorist attacks in Paris, the responsibility for which was claimed by a small Middle East group, the government made visas compulsory for all people coming into France other than EEC or Swiss citizens. The measure was mainly aimed at the traffic of black and Arab visitors from France's former African colonies.

THE TWO MEASURES were passed to placate the extreme right-wing National Front which had helped defeat the government by voting with the left in the election of a socialist to a key committee chairmanship in the National Assembly. The National Front welcomed the expulsions of the aliens as proof that at last measures are being taken to 'safeguard French national sovereignty'. Moreover, with a view to the presidential elections which must be held sometime in the next 17 months, the French right are keen to create a climate of fear and racial tension in order to present themselves as better guardians of internal security than the left.

Item: The scenes of chaos at Heathrow airport with thousands of Asians waiting disconsolately were widely shown on European television. Four days later the French secretly expelled the blacks. Once the news broke, a storm of protest was raised from civil liberties and human rights groups and lawyers have expressed concern over the denial of judicial appeal.

It would be comforting to dismiss these examples as isolated incidents, disconnected and based as much on legitimate concern about terrorism and drug dealing (the latter being the preferred excuse to justify the expulsions) as a growing series of measures whose reasoning is racially based. However, in all cases the expellees, or those fleeing from persecution or intolerable living standards, are, without exception, black. □

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ARTS

VIDEO

Starting from scratch

Alex Graham

Autumn highlights, in the first of our regular columns on independent video.

George Halett

First the Nobel Prize, now the video: Wole Soyinka

AMONG THE MANY events in November marking the 50th anniversary of regular BBC television broadcasts will be a spectacular video presentation at the Commonwealth Institute, charting the history of innovation in technology and programme-making in British television. What is sure to be missing from this vainglorious celebration of *The Golden Box* is any reference to television's most imaginative offspring, independent video. But appropriately enough, this autumn also sees a notable surge of activity in independent video, an area of the arts marked by a degree of dedication and achievement that is in inverse proportion to the amount of public recognition it receives.

The second edition of the *Good Video Guide* has just been launched, a new project that has been developed under the auspices of the Video Distribution Forum, itself formed of an amalgam of interests in the field to develop distribution strategies and to promote the work of its members and associates. Published by ICA Video, the production and distribution wing of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, the *Good Video Guide* lists a selection of 50 or so current video productions, with the principal aim of encouraging libraries to invest in programmes that offer an alternative and often challenging perspective on a wide range of issues. One topical example is the ICA recording of Nobel Prize-winning writer Wole Soyinka. By the simple expedients of pre-selection, adequate and sometimes critical descriptions and centralised booking, the guide has already succeeded in developing new markets in an area of notoriously timid and conservative taste. Its success to date is a measure of the appetite that exists for alternative programming.

In November South Hill Park Centre in Bracknell hosts the Seventh National Festival of Independent Video. The annual Festival's survival, and indeed its growth, is a small triumph and a credit to the Media Centre at Bracknell which has nurtured this odd association of interests, ranging from the dedicated low-tech adherents of 'public access at all costs' through politically committed documentarists to artists using video as a medium of self-expression. At its inception it seemed that these interests were eternally and mutually exclusive options, but in its own way the Bracknell festival has engendered a form of coalition that has allowed some of the best of recent independent video to come to fruition.

Later in the month London Video Arts, the main British distributor of artists' video, presents a week-long programme of screenings and events at the ICA and the London Film-Makers Coop called *Channel 6*. This is a follow-up to another successful series last year called *Channel 5* — the name itself implying an imaginative leap beyond the offerings of ITV's Channel 4 with its well-worn brief for innovation and independent voices in television. But paradoxically Channel 4 has been a saviour to independent video through its financial support for a network of film and video workshops of which there are presently 14 nationwide. These Franchised Workshops are funded under a unique agreement with the main television union, the ACTT, called the Workshop Declaration. Under this agreement programmes can be made which may or may not be ultimately destined for broadcast at the Channel's option, but may be staffed in a way that respects the very different traditions of access and teaching workshops to those of television production. Channel 4's support has become all the more crucial with the demise of the GLC and the other metropolitan councils who had been major funders of independent video. The reactions to the funding crisis have in the main tended to encourage a much more pragmatic approach to meeting the costs of keeping the workshops going. A new 'realism' has entered the picture with work to commission or for commercial clients providing the daily bread. It may yet prove to be the case that independence is a commodity that can be bought, and the question remains as to whether the video community has the resilience and strength of purpose to see off the threat of serious compromise.

In all of the foregoing the appellation 'independent' is of course problematic. True independence is impossible. Short of personal fortune, financial dependence on subsidy, patronage or commercial contracts will always be a qualifying factor. It is just that the metropolitan councils showed a benevolence that cannot be expected any longer. Even the workshops funded by Channel 4 under the Workshop Declaration are coming under increasing pressure to create product that will find its way on to the screen and thus justify investment. The reassuring signs, though, are that the Channel is preparing to commission a new series to follow up on the success of last year's *Video 1, 2, 3* programmes by Triple Vision, the programmes that unleashed on the world the entertaining anarchy of scratch video, the reprocessing of off-air footage in blunt critiques of that medium itself. Another forthcoming commission will allow the Gorilla Tapes scratch artists to exploit one whole day's worth of television output: the reward for an approach to the technique that moves beyond the formulaic repetition of much of the genre.

So it seems that the work of independent video-makers may at last reach a much wider public. Whatever the problems of accurately defining independent video, the programmes made under its rubric clearly offer opportunities for expression and debate that cannot be found elsewhere and often engage in a dialogue with the aesthetics and production values of television as it is commonly and passively received. This autumn's series of video events are a welcome opportunity to test these fertile waters. □

The Golden Box *is on at the Commonwealth Institute from 31 October until 4 January.*
The Good Video Guide *can be ordered from ICA Video, 12 Carlton House Terrace, London SW1Y 5AH*
The Seventh National Festival of Independent Video is at South Hill Park Arts Centre, Bracknell from 21-23 November.
Channel 6 *is at the ICA and London Film-Makers Co-op from 25-30 November.*

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PERFORMANCE

Positive images

Kenneth Rea

Polish performance company Akademia Ruchu has just been painting the town red at the Almeida Theatre

WHAT MAKES THE BEST performance work look so original and stimulating, from a theatrical point of view, is that it usually springs from people with a commitment to visual art rather than dramatic literature. Because of this, they are able to cut through a lot of unwieldy tradition.

Akademia Ruchu is a good example. Described as Poland's foremost performance company, it seems to take its inspiration from photography and has developed a theatrical technique of its own to translate this to the stage. The result is a vivid style of visual theatre that is often highly satisfying, provided one doesn't worry too much about the precise meaning of every image. Two new productions are currently touring Britain; I saw them at the Almeida.

Carthage, apparently about group activity, is the more abstract piece. It begins with a huddle of people all speaking intensely in monotonous gibberish. Periodically, they pick up their chairs and move their little meeting until, finally, they crash into a great slanting wall that divides the stage and closes them in like an emblem of oppression. It ends with a blazing fire on the platform, that is then hauled up into space to swing in silence.

In *Supper. Goodnight* (commissioned by the Midland Group, Nottingham), the company builds up a composite portrait of life in Poland today; it is like looking at a loving photographic essay. Five giant screens are moved around to create a constantly shifting environment of uncertainty and suspicion. They are black on one side, white on the other. Sometimes people are squashed between them, as if in a crowded bus or a narrow corridor; sometimes the screens part to reveal more private glimpses. Between black screens, two men in overcoats and hats squat down, smoking cigarettes while anxiously looking about. On the other side of the stage, a screen slides across to expose a woman in her bra bending over to wash herself from a basin that stands on a red chair.

The collage of radio sounds, music and voices speaking in different languages reinforces the ambivalence of this kind of existence. 'It is better to be red. It is better to be dead. It is better to wait. It is better to run away,' intones a female voice.

Disturbing though it often is, *Supper. Goodnight* gains much of its power through flashes of wit tempered by an urgent pace. A man reading a newspaper turns the page to reveal blankness. Another comes out in a dinner jacket and furtively flashes a red badge pinned under his lapel. He turns up another part of the jacket to reveal a different badge, then another and another until he is seen to be wearing dozens of badges. The climax is a disorientating image of redness that perhaps points up the final ambivalence of the piece. Through dim light we perceive red people in red clothes sitting on red chairs at red tables in front of red screens, drinking tea. Even a small piece of white paper that one of them holds up is turned red. Suddenly, a screen falls backwards, revealing a girl in white. Aesthetically, the effect is startling and, ambiguous though much of it may be, *Supper. Goodnight* gave me a stronger impression of present-day Poland than most text-based productions I have seen. □

For more about current performance art, see Work in Progress p.26

DANCE

Backward

Stephanie Jordan

Despite new beginnings at the Royal Ballet, the tone so far is distinctly regressive

THERE ARE BIG changes at the top of the Royal Ballet this season: star dancer Anthony Dowell accedes to Artistic Directorship after the fashion of major ballet companies today; David Bintley transfers from SWRB as Resident Choreographer and Isaiah Jackson arrives from the USA as Principal Conductor. Most important, so far, the company has acknowledged its greatest asset, the Ashton heritage, with a revival of *La Valse* to open the season and a triple bill in his name: *The Dream, A Month in the Country* and, as centrepiece, the revived *Symphonic Variations.*

It may be too early to assess the new company direction, but it is not too early to comment on the condition in which the Ashton repertoire now reaches the stage. The auspices are not all favourable. I suppose the two repertoire regulars survive the best, especially *The Dream* with Antoinette Sibley and Stephen Jefferies as the fairy monarchs, and some lively mortal lovers. Sibley continues to delight us with her play between authority and passion, risking abandon and racing the beat in the fervour of the moment. *A Month in the Country* is another hardy work; although, increasingly mannered over the years, it now deserves a rest. But it is the revivals from a more distant past which are the most worrying.

Apparently upon the wish of Ashton himself, several second-cast soloists/principals replaced those scheduled for the first night of *Symphonic Variations.* Whatever the original, more interesting billing might have accomplished, the cast that we were given seemed ill chosen and produced a distorted image of a ballet cherished by many as Ashton's masterpiece, even the 'signature work' of the Royal. We can recall from earlier performances, or photographs of the historic original 1946 line-up (Fonteyn, Somes, Shearer), how, with miraculous simplicity, Ashton achieved the sublime in this ballet, through the modest and harmonious behaviour of six dancers gliding and reassembling in calm configurations within Fedorovich's glowing arena. Not so in the present revival, where fumbled and hastily trod steps, insensitive upper bodies and arms too often blight the choreography—and where over-anxiety, or schoolgirl enthusiasm, take the place of serenity and liquidity. No Ashton style here. Unexpectedly, the new American principal Cynthia Harvey, though less familiar with his work than her colleagues, comes closest to realising the grace in this piece.

Dowell's legacy is a company that has regressed to adolescence, and it is not the company to be dancing *La Valse.* Danced without understanding, such a suave bagatelle of a ballet is dangerously likely to fail; this season's waltzers, soloists and *corps* alike, succumb to its perils. The lifts look painful rather than heady and someone out front ought to decide whether those torsos should swoop low, not so low, or not at all.

Galanteries, Bintley's contribution to the opening night of the season, is happily without any of the irritating bravura brashness that has weakened his recent ballets. Perhaps he checked this predilection because he was exploring the image of 18th-century manners and tastes, decorations around a highly formal framework. The ballet is a response to music of this period, in the *style galant:* solos, duets, trios and ensembles to an amalgam of movements from a Mozart *Divertimento* and *Serenade.* The dancers busily weave a network of steps beneath a calm, poised centre, shifting from symmetry and back to symmetry. Jan Blake's designs are the ultimate in refinement: grey costumes and a backcloth of grey squares crossed by a pair of Chinese brushstrokes. But, whereas some choreographers have made a virtue of revitalising images of the past, Bintley doesn't develop his material. In *Galanteries*, the ordinary and the borrowed remain emphatically ordinary, and the relatively inventive appears like a lapse of style, even a miscalculation — Lesley Collier, for instance, lurching perilously to the floor out of some strange hopping lifts.

Company links with Jerome Robbins have been renewed. The opening night included an old favourite, *The Concert,* delivered with full hilarity, and *Opus 19/The Dreamer,* an odd choice for the repertoire considering the many superior Robbins pieces that might have been selected. The Dreamer is a man soliloquising and indulging in various encounters with the woman of his imagination before a backing group. Prokofiev's Violin Concerto No. 1 inspired such subject matter and, originally, it was the mighty Baryshnikov who played the hero. With the Royal, at least, the choreography is incomprehensible, jolting from mood to mood and style to style. Jonathan Cope and Harvey are unable to patch together such an awkward collage, Cope's elegance and power as usual frustrated by sudden lapses of concentration and gaucheness in partnering. But, I ask, how would *you* like to be dogged by a chorus of stalking *pointes,* prissy bounding knees and hands like Highway Code stop signals? □

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CINEMA

Carry on up the waterfall

Judith Williamson

The Mission (PG)
Warner West End, ABC Fulham Road, Screen On The Green
Latino
ICA

SO WORKED UP has this country become about British cinema that any Puttnam-Goldcrest production appears not as a mere film, but, as the trailer for **The Mission** grandly puts it, '*destined* to become the *motion picture event* of the year'. The attention paid to Puttnam's films outside the cinema is becoming par for the course: in this case, *The Mission* (directed by Roland Joffe of *The Killing Fields*) is being linked with Survival International, an extremely worthwhile campaign for the rights of threatened tribal peoples, and the film's own missionary aura of 'doing good' seems to be part of the general canonisation of Puttnam and his national achievement.

However, *The Mission* is not about threatened tribal peoples. The film's advertising shows at a glance who its subjects really are: at the top of a waterfall, in huge letters, 'Robert de Niro' 'Jeremy Irons' and below, between inset pictures of them, '*The Mission*'. (The ad is too epic to bother with 'and' or 'in'.) In smaller writing, the film's plot is accurately summarised: 'Deep in the jungles of South America two men bring civilisation to a native tribe. Now, after years of struggle together, they find themselves on opposite sides in a dramatic fight for the natives' independence.' (i.e. for the natives' continued dependence on *them*.) 'One will trust in the power of prayer. One will believe in the might of the sword.'

And there you have it, with a lot of lush cinematography and the kind of virtuoso sequences (e.g. a whole army climbing a waterfall) that distract you into wondering how they did it. In essence, the movie is a kind of spiritual *Top Gun*, with Jesuit priests Irons and de Niro 'up there with the best of the best' in a different sense. The intensity of the relationship between these two white men (exchanging crosses instead of US army medallions) is the only real dynamic in the film — placing it in the current flood of homo-erotic movies.

In one memorable sequence de Niro undergoes a self-enforced penance by dragging his worldly goods up the sheer rock face of a waterfall, and when he arrives at the top unable to stand, an Indian cuts the rope and the whole lot falls down the cliff into the water. Suddenly relieved of his burden, de Niro bursts into tears. At this key moment, after showing de Niro's weeping face, what does the film cut to? To the face of the Indian who has brought about this crucial symbolic release (an option which would have opened the way for more interest in, and interaction with, the Indians as characters, rather than camera-fodder)? No, to Jeremy Irons. It's hard to remember, at times, that we're not back in Brideshead, with Anthony Andrews, instead of de Niro, exchanging loaded looks with him. Like almost all films made by imperialist cultures about their past, this film goes deep into the hearts of the oppressors, while leaving the oppressed to figure as nameless pawns in the so-much-more-exciting story of individual white heroes. (The Indians in the 'threatened tribe' don't even warrant individual names in the credits.)

Latino, Haskell Wexler's first feature since *Medium Cool*, is a much braver and more intelligent attempt to show the effects of Western imperialism on a Latin American country, this time contemporary Nicaragua. Its protagonist is a Chicano US soldier, Eddie Guerrero, who becomes increasingly disenchanted with his role in aiding the Contras as he realises what the US army is actually doing in Nicaragua. Overtly, both *Latino* and *The Mission* face the problem of getting an audience to care what happens to a group of foreigners. *Latino* does this in part by setting up some positive image of life in a Nicaraguan village *before* it is attacked — and by

The National Sound Archive Autumn Events

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having Eddie become emotionally involved with two Nicaraguans: a woman whose father is killed by Contras, and a young boy prisoner who, despite all Eddie's efforts, remains loyal to his village. *The Mission* doesn't even bother to depict Indian life *before* European settlement, but deals with the same problem by having its Indians learn to sing chorales and play violins, so that their destruction can ultimately be symbolised by a violin floating down the river — along with other debris of *European* 'civilisation'.

In both films the narrative is structured through the dilemma of those who perpetrate, rather than those who suffer, colonialism. In *The Mission* this takes the literal form of a letter, dictated by the papal envoy who ruthlessly seals the fate of the Missions and philosophises his regrets very eloquently in the process. In *Latino* the story is Eddie's change of heart. But this takes place through a kind of spurious racial solidarity: i.e. he is the same race as the Nicaraguans he's sent to destroy. When he takes a tortilla from one old woman's house, he says, 'that coulda been mama's kitchen' and, about a machine-gunned boy, 'he walked just like my kid brother'.

Obviously the important point being made is that those oppressed within the USA have much in common with those oppressed *by* the USA. But the device of the 'Latino' shares the same premise as *The Mission*: that similarity is a prerequisite of solidarity. The fact that the Indians are singing European church music as the army approaches to massacre them is meant to rend our hearts in a way that, supposedly, their making their own form of music would not. The Other has to be made the Same as ourselves. As the violins play in the jungle, and Latino tastes tortillas like his mother's, it is not a common humanity that is being asserted: that is precisely what is being denied, if it is only by seeing a mirror-image of our own culture that we can recognise the value of another. □

TRAILERS

Black Film-making: New Traditions is the title of a one-day conference held at The Triangle, Birmingham, as part of the Birmingham Film & TV Festival. Workshops will be led by contemporary Black film-makers; for details ring 021-235 3008. Meanwhile London's Ritzy cinema continues its **Black Film Season** — of particular interest is the 26 October triple bill of the 1951 adaptation of Richard Wright's *Native Son*, starring the author himself, a rare showing of John Cassavetes' early film *Shadows*, plus Shirley Clark's 1963 experimental documentary set in Harlem, *The Cool World*. Also on 25 and 26 October, **Black Visual Artists Forum**, a weekend of seminars and workshops, takes place at the ICA, London; details from 01-931 0493. Altogether a weekend of antidotes to . . .

. . . **The Mission** — presented at the NFT on 25 October with Derek Malcolm interviewing director Roland Joffe. Here is your chance to ask those awkward questions. Tickets from 01-928 3232.

Open Screening is the last event in the London Film-Makers' Co-op's 20th anniversary celebration. People are invited to show 16mm and super 8 film as well as 35mm slides. Unfinished work welcome; admission free; details from LFMC on 01-586 4806.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Towers of Babel and ivory

Naseem Khan

THE ONLY TIME when things looked like getting nasty at Nottingham's recent showcase of performance art occurred in the Sculpture Court: a grand name for a convenient section of flat roof that links the various buildings that have been joined together to form the composite Midland Group Arts Centre.

The group Babel had just finished its final stint, an angry piece (compared with its previous very measured one) in which the three members had flung themselves regularly against two large sheets of rusty metal propped up against one wall. Afterwards, they retreated to a large bale of straw in one corner and proceeded to read out a statement detailing outrage at the conditions in which they'd been expected to perform. The adjoining bar had not been closed during their silent, concentrated pieces. The TV monitors showing promo pop videos had blared on. And the Sculpture Court itself, in which Babel had constructed a detailed set or environment, had been used by heedless festival goers as simply a short cut from one wing of the centre to another.

This was a protest of principle, which goes back to one of the debates within the performance art world on the place of performance art: does it belong in the market place or in the laboratory? Should it be rarified or popular? Two years ago, in a previous Nottingham showcase, a formal debate on that selfsame issue ended in a stalemate. Should performance art be able to demand total attention and silence? Or should it have to contend with the vagaries of general life and adapt accordingly? The questions are as pertinent today.

They had already surfaced in blunter form two days before, in the showcase's annual banquet, where after-dinner speakers try to shine a critical searchlight on the field. It was boring, accused the festival compere, gorgeously-frocked Neil Bartlett: self-congratulatory, displaying an imbalance of style and sophistication. 'We want,' he demanded, 'art that has more thump!' But who should be thumped, other diners wondered? 'Performance art is essentially useless,' claimed one; couched, added another, 'in a language that the majority of people in this country cannot speak.' Rubbish, responded a third: 'As far as I'm concerned, performance art came from the working class and is working-class. It's pig ignorant to say they don't understand it. They do, but they don't get enough of it.'

Whether this is true or not, it is still a fact that Nottingham's working class was not exactly breaking down the doors to see people bashing their heads against sheets of iron. Nor, unfortunately, can it be held, as another banqueter stated, that 'if something is good, it communicates with people, irrespective of language and history'. The major thrust of the arts in Britain is so counter to the modes of performance art that more often than not they invite derision. Poles on heads, dirty nappies, junk sculpture, Tate bricks: the list can go on and on. It is disingenuous of performance artists to assume they can circumvent decades of cultural conditioning as to what art should be. Challenging the norm is harder than that and requires perseverance, stealth and cunning.

It also requires availability of work, which is why this showcase (or National Review of Live Art, as it is now called) is so valuable. Although small gallery venues for performance art have increased recently, partly through Arts Council support, major gatherings of this type have diminished. Nottingham provides both a useful overview and a potential stimulus to development in the field. It's a crammed and crowded occasion, combining established practitioners like Bow Gamelan and Charlie Hooker, foreign work like that of Poland's Akademia Ruchu* and new Platform Performers (often recent graduates). Few of the pieces disappointed (the new pre-vetting process has eliminated the grottier end of the market). The nearest to doing so was Marty St James and Anne Wilson's long piece, a laboured and unfunny response to popular culture (Mills and Boon, *Eastenders, Come Dancing* et al). Others notched up, by contrast, some neat bull's eyes. Ralf Ralf, two brothers, used invented language, sound and broad, absurd movement to suggest an unmistakeable and hilarious view of human behaviour. Tracksuited Philip Hughes began his event with a series of strenuous, serious training exercises, lunging at a plastic-shrouded punchbag that burst to release scores of cascading onions. Steve Purcell and Co. provided a cool and gently critical view of male grooming: two impassive young men carefully wash a third one. Behind him, pinned up against the wall like a human sacrifice, her hair staked out to form an aureole upon the wall, waited a woman.

Visual clarity was one of the strong points of this year's festival, as well as a greater economy than in the past. Purcell's event, for instance, was pleasantly simple. Others had been even more restrained in their creations. David Coxon had used the elements of light and smoke to make a haunting piece. Holland's Peter Barens efficiently juxtaposed nakedness with fully-dressed formality, complete ease with tenseness, pacifism with aggression. Contrasting states emerged even more strongly in Shaun Coton's fascinating piece: a five-day development, worked on by the artists for eight hours each day. During that time, he painstakingly transposed a vast heap of human debris (broken pram, abandoned shoes, shards of mirror and so on) that he'd gathered in the streets into a complex arrangement that invested unwanted cast-offs with a high degree of involvement and care. Not exactly market-place art, but not divorced from it either. □

**For a review of Akademia Ruchu see p.24*

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THEATRE

Black is bountiful

Victoria Radin

Black satire, black Woody Allens, Black Power Opera: in New York they've come a long way since Porgy and Bess

MALCOLM X, the Black Muslim leader, was a thorn in the side of the liberal whites and hopeful blacks who worked together for the black cause in the United States in the Fifties and Sixties. A former hustler, pimp and junkie who had served time for armed robbery, he believed that integration was impossible and advocated either a return to Africa or black separatism within America. In 1963, most of the black nation cringed when he reacted to the assassination of JFK by declaring that 'the chickens have come home to roost'. A year later he was himself gunned down — possibly by blacks — as he addressed a meeting in Harlem.

His life, as expressed in his autobiography, was lived with marvellous zest and energy; and it is perhaps just possible, given the bootless condition of Broadway, to envisage it as a fit subject for popular musical drama, which is how Christopher Davis, who wrote the story for **X (The Life and Times of Malcolm X)** first conceived it. But his brother, the 35-year-old Anthony Davis, a symphonic and jazz composer schooled in the classical tradition, had other ideas. *X*, for which their cousin, Thulani Davis, a poet, wrote the libretto, is a fully-fledged if totally unlikely opera which has just completed its four performances (all of them sold out) for the prestigious New York City Opera at Lincoln Center.

There was nothing mealy-mouthed, soft-shoe-shuffling, Uncle Tom-ish or even forgiving about it. Malcolm's own account of himself in his book is far more genial. *X*'s trio of begetters are single-minded in their attempt to convey a message — and that is that Malcolm, like every other black in white American society, was a victim of that society. This is agitprop opera, a bizarre, and, as far as I know, innovative hybrid which put me in mind of the Chinese ballet I once saw in which every arabesque ended in a clenched-fist salute.

Nearly all the first act is devoted to an impressionistic account of Malcolm's childhood — early years of confusion and fears which are fulfilled when his preacher father dies in dubious circumstances. His mother goes mad and a white woman social worker (a performer who doubles as a good-time girl and a journalist and has, morally speaking, all the worst tunes) separates the children into various homes. An aunt 'rescues' Malcolm and takes him to Boston, from where the boy escapes to Harlem and to excitingly conveyed wrong-doing. The first time we see and hear the adult Malcolm sing he is tied up and being beaten in prison — and his aria doesn't pull any punches: 'my truth is white men/killed my old man/drove my mother mad/. . . my truth is fury.'

These words came to us, an audience in equal measure black and white, not only through sound but flashed, as is the wont of the City Opera even for English-language works, in huge lighted letters above the stage. Brecht couldn't have thought up better in terms of indoctrination and alienation. I have some quarrels with the libretto, which is intentionally demotic and repetitious, and especially with the story, which never glanced off its chosen message. The music built itself on rhythmic sequences in an unmelodic fashion and was most successful when it echoed other forms, such as jazz for the urban scenes and the Near East for Malcolm's pilgrimage to Mecca.

Rhoda Levine's staging, however, was impressive. Using a combination of theatrical techniques borrowed from Brecht and Grotowski, she deployed an enormous company of some 45 people in consistently eye-catching configurations on a stage filled with chairs and other 'found objects' and backed by a huge, modern, social realist mural. Ben Holt, tall but, I imagine, rather more modest than the real Malcolm, Thomas Young who played a characterful street guy and Malcolm's mentor Elijah Muhammad, and Priscilla Baskerville (trebling as the major women in the life) come from a variety of musical traditions: Young has done everything from Handel to *Jesus Christ Superstar* and *Porgy and Bess*.

The terrifically engaging **She's Gotta Have It**, a film debut by Spike Lee, a protean 29-year-old black from Brooklyn who wrote, directed, edited and performed in it, has absolutely no time for black rage or white oppression. His educated, middle-class, bohemian young Brooklyn characters live in an easy, shrugging and, apparently, totally black world in which sexual morality is their most threatening problem. The film turns on Nola (Tracy Camila Johns), a sweet-faced graphic artist who lives in a smart loft and reverses expectations by adroitly balancing a trio of lovers who each want exclusivity. Seen through her eyes — and this film is much less about being black than about being a woman — the three comprise a vain, consumer-oriented (but not stupid: he wins at Scrabble) male model, a serious romantic partner and a flip, bespectacled ne'er-do-well, played by Mr Lee himself. His own father Bill, who wrote the lively score, appears as Nola's Dad, and a girl whom I presume to be his sister plays a musician friend. I hope they'll forgive me if I say that they all bear some resemblance to Woody Allen: and with its talks to camera, its fantasy sequences and generally chopped-up and nose-thumbing insouciance, the film has echoes of *Annie Hall* — but without the implicit pretention and with a strong feeling for the erotic and lyrical. *She's Gotta Have It* is currently playing at four cinemas in New York and has won Spike Lee manifold offers from Hollywood. So, goodbye, too, to things like *The Color Purple*.

For a white, middle-class liberal it is a curiously cathartic experience to see these works in the company of a black audience and if nothing else I felt exorcised at a preview of George C. Wolfe's *The Colored Museum* at the Public Theater. Wolfe has conceived his revue-play, and quite cleverly, as a series of revolving museum exhibits on the subject of black mythology. While he does succeed in hitting at various contemporary Uncle Toms — *Ebony* Beautiful People, gay drag queens and calamitous Ancient-Greek-black theatre — the skits are frequently too angry-sentimental to make much real impact. But it's interesting to note that the Public's artistic director Joe Papp, who many years ago did mixed-race productions of Shakespeare, feels the time is right to provide an arena in which black people can send themselves up rotten, stripped of Significance or apology. As Wolfe told the *Village Voice:* our 'culture is magical enough in itself'. □

TELEVISION

Roger the dodger

Hugo Williams

WELL, HAS SHE got cancer or hasn't she? Or hasn't it been decided yet? You can imagine the plot consultants and audience sympathy-level analysers sitting round a table weighing up the pros and cons of an agonising death for Angie (drawn out over however many months her contract has to run, with possibilities of remission depending on cashflow and viewing figures) while some poor bloody writer tries to keep up with their calculations and some even lower being sits on the cuttings-book for confessions and leakages to the Press from these **Eastenders** (BBC1) superstars. The series owes a lot to the famed South American soaps, now dubbed into most languages. At this rate it will soon be following them into orbit.

You see, Jan, Den's mistress, has finally given Den an ultimatum, her or me, and Angie, Den's wife, has said she will do anything to hang onto him. *Anything*. Isn't it a bit thin having Den suddenly declare himself squeamish about medical details so that he can't ring up the doctor to find out 'just exactly what is going on', a thing he's usually so keen to know? And would Jan really have given away the vital time factor of her ultimatum, allowing Angie to prepare her finest performance to date? Of course, reality has got nothing to do with it by now; it's all down to those cliff-hanging specialists with their audience grappling-irons and viewing-figure charts. It sometimes seems the whole teetering national obsession is in danger of peaking from suspense-fatigue and sliding down the other side into a kind of national lottery, like the boat race, with the odds calculated by computer.

In the meantime it is superb stuff. Angie and Den's two-hander episode last week, with classical interference from a window-cleaner as Fool or Death's Head depending on your cancer-hype credulity, was open-heart acting of a very high pulse rate indeed. I believed she had the disease because Anita Dobson so clearly did. On reflection I think an ulcer for Den is a safer bet.

Oh dear, it seems impossible any more to appreciate the *way* intellectuals express themselves in public. Rather, it is neccessary to appreciate the '*ways in which*', or even the '*types of ways in which*' they express themselves. And nowhere more markedly than on **Thinking Aloud** (BBC2), which returns with a handsome new presenter, Michael Ignatieff. The subject last week was sexual morality, hence the pluralities skedaddling about the studio in search of alibis, the circumlocutions of Roger Scruton and his adversaries more often resembling circumnavigations than thought. 'I think there is an important sense in which it is true to say that

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. . .' began Scruton, furrowing his brow in search of the original thought he had had, now all but lost in the welter of professional preparations and stupidity insurance policies these *sorts* or *types* of people take out with every second word. What, only one sense this time, Rog? What happened to all the other little senses? Do you think it's fair on them, not to take them all into consideration in the same sentence?

Scruton is a kind of moral majority robot with dodgy wiring in the areas of religion and homosexuality, not unlike Mary Whitehouse, but using the abstract vocabulary (unsuccessfully) to avoid becoming a figure of fun. Basically, you see, the truth is that God disapproves of queers. And this knowledge is a bit of a responsibility if you are a professional philosopher. Indeed, Scruton would go so far as to say that 'sexual desire itself is morally com-promising', a thing even God wouldn't express in such terms, were he around to do so. 'There is no ethical consensus among the cultural elite to which we belong,' said Scruton, 'but there *is* among the rest of humanity.' It was like saying 'There by the grace of God goes everyone except me and the cultural elite'. The other panelists didn't know where to begin. *What* consensus? They should have advised him to watch *Eastenders*, though both programmes would be off the air if their producers took heed of the sensible and relaxed Michael Neve, who professed himself 'on the side of the least said soonest mended' like the rest of us. I preferred the contribution of Helena Kennedy, who sat there heavily pregnant, as if to say she had heard it all before.

Last week, those uplifting chords by Sibelius, suggestive of high civic duty, which accompany the credits of **This Week** (ITV) ushered in a programme on Sex Education in Schools, which confronted, among other things, the question, 'What are genital warts?' The answer seemd to be that they were warts which grew on your genitals, which were extremely hard to get rid of, as there was no known cure. To the question 'What is an orgasm?' one parent was brutally frank. 'I don't know. To be perfectly honest, I haven't got a clue.'

The 'electronic poll' we learnt was not a computer-operated vibrator, but viewer participation by an unspecified number of button-pressers. How, they were asked, should homosexuality be referred to in schools: a) as normal and permissable; b) as deviant and abnormal; c) not included on syllabus? Forty-five per cent went for b), 30 per cent for a) and Kenneth Baker said bravely that he did not think it ought to be encouraged. Return to GO. □

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Books

YOUNG ADULTS

Help!

Adèle Geras

It may seem strange to those who leapt, in a bound, from Blyton to Bellow, but fiction aimed specifically at teenage readers is catching on here for good reason

JUDY BLUME writes novels for children and young adults. She is one of the most widely read of all children's writers and the reason for this is not simply because, like many other writers in the genre, she deals directly with Problems. Her books are liked because they are accessible, warm hearted, often funny, and because in them her readers can identify with children like themselves in difficult situations, which may seem silly to the world at large but which are nevertheless very real to the sufferer.

Above all, Judy Blume is honest and uninhibited. Twenty years ago, a book like *Are You There, God, It's Me, Margaret* (about a group of school friends in suspense about their first period: who'll be first to get it, who last?) would have been unthinkable. Now, menstruation can be openly discussed. In *Blubber* she tackles overweight, in *Forever* first sex, and so on, but if there's one constant message in all her work it's this: people must talk about what's bothering them.

Letters to Judy: What Kids Wish They Could Tell You (Heinemann, £10.95) is a selection of letters written to Judy Blume by her readers. She

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receives about 2,000 letters a month. She comments on them here (sometimes a little mawkishly and with a bit too much gush for British tastes), recounting anecdotes from her own life that have a bearing on the problem she's considering, dealing with everything that comes her way, from acne to child abuse, and, above all, being *there*, a kind of invisible ear that listens and is interested without being emotionally involved.

Blume's readers see that she knows what a child is like, and this is important. Many children find it difficult to imagine their parents when young and are sure that they have forgotten the experience. Unlike a parent, Judy doesn't nag, scold, criticise or moan. Her advice is also practical where it needs to be. At the back of the book she gives details of agencies who can help with serious problems. If it's a matter of feeling confused/unpopular/different / spotty / fat / flat-chested / shy / depressed/ ignorant of the facts of life, her answer is: TALK. It's good advice. Unfortunately, the parents and teachers to whom children are directed are often even more tongue-tied than the children themselves, because of *their* tongue-tied parents: a cycle of silence as neat as the cycle of deprivation. Blume's latest book is an effort to break the silence, to show parents that they can talk without looking foolish, to show children that parents are human and remember what things were like when they were young, and to show everyone that however trivial the problem may seem it's worth trying to sort it out. Above all, Judy says, whatever it is that's worrying you, you are not alone.

It's a comforting idea and one that magazines for young women are busy selling. Some are still churning out picture romances and quizzes about how you rate as a bathing beauty, but the best of them, like *Mizz* and *Just Seventeen*, know that what their readers want is practical advice, not dream fodder. They do a good job of producing, for example, fashion pictures that could just about be you or one of your friends rather than a dauntingly beautiful model. They acknowledge that young people live in the real world and therefore there are articles and letters about anorexia, contraception, suicide, sexism in the media and dealing with rejection. They also know, as Judy Blume does, that teenagers are obsessed with looking right, hence the advice about applying your blusher and choosing the right foundation.

Relationships are a constant source of worry and the problem pages deal with what to do if your boyfriend two-times you, as well as with graver issues such as rape and venereal disease. You can find out about the latest movies and records and sometimes (too rarely) the magazines even pick out a few books their readers might enjoy. The advertisements in teenage magazines are much more down-to-earth than those in publications for the older woman. It's a relief not to see fantasies about what can happen to you after a certain kind of bath. Girls read the magazines, they discuss them endlessly with one another. But what do boys do? Unisex magazines do exist, but they seem, like *Smash Hits* and *No. 1*, to be specifically about music. It's to be hoped that at least some of the boys talk to the girls.

Information is more widely available, sexual freedom is greater these days, so why the need for talk between parents and children? Because they are the people children have turned to since childhood to interpret the world, they have to be used to check conflicting pieces of advice. Judy Blume's book has the great merit of pointing out that it's up to adults to make the first move, and of showing them that, contrary to all indications, their children really *would* like to be able to ask and argue and disagree without fear of anger or retribution. She has also, it must be said, made her actions speak at least as loudly as her words by setting up a charity to help children called the 'Kids' Fund'. All royalties from the sale of *Letters to Judy* go to this charity, which, since 1981, 'has provided more than $145,000 . . . for support of programmes that address (kids') needs and concerns'. □

Adèle Geras will be reviewing the latest in fiction for young adults in our Special Kids' Books issue of 5 December.

FICTION

Deep within

Sheila MacLeod

Winter's Child
DEA TRIER MØRCH trans. JOAN TATE *Serpent's Tail* £9.95 & £4.95

IT IS, AS THE author so often reminds us, utterly a woman's world: the clean, white maternity hospital surrounded by a clean, white fall of snow and isolated from the nearby world of busy Copenhagen. Everyone has their own place in the social scheme of things. On the wards the women are rendered equal by their hospital uniform, the paucity of their possessions and their common womanhood.

Prenatal is full of women with potentially dangerous pregnancies: Olivia is diabetic, Linda's back was injured in a road accident, Yvonne is expecting twins and Marie has an excess of foetal fluid. Postnatal is full of mothers and babies, most flourishing, some frail and one or two irreparably damaged. In between are the labour rooms, where wonderful or terrible things may happen and, for some, the Intensive Care ward with its rows of incubators and its atmosphere of hushed anxiety.

At first the women seem indistinguishable, as if the reader herself had just entered the hospital for the first time. But gradually they emerge as individuals, with or without husbands and other children, with or without parents, friends, relations or jobs in the world outside. Some suffer more than others, but the arbitrariness of their varying lots (which is the arbitrariness of Nature itself) only serves to bring the women closer together in a mutual support system which is at the same time almost impersonal and full of generous emotional warmth.

Winter's Child traces a month (including Christmas) in the life of the hospital and its patients. Its pace is as smooth and orderly as that of hospital routine and its overall tone firmly sensible, though capable of both humour and lyricism. Dea Trier Mørch is unsparing with procedural and medical details, but never sensational or melodramatic. She makes birth seem an ordinary process which is at the same time miraculous — an impression enhanced by her own simple and rather touching drawings which accompany the text.

Most of the novel is narrated through the consciousness of Marie, an unmarried kindergarten teacher who sees the hospital itself as a sort of womb where everyday rules have been suspended and people behave according to an alternate set of laws. The metaphor of wombs within a womb is central to the novel — so why does the wretched translator persist throughout in using the word 'stomach' instead of 'womb', or even 'belly'? I retranslate:

> The womb is the world. The womb is the universe, with nebulae and moons and planets far inside. With membranes and swaddling clothes. The womb is a drum. The womb is a heavy cow on the ground. A huge pear-shaped muscle. A riddle.

To say that the stomach is the world, etc. (which is what you will find) is nonsensical in this context and a fitter slogan for Falstaff than for a pregnant woman. □

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PAPERBACKS

One and all

Julian Rathbone

FIRST, three first novels by American women. **The Narrow House** (Shoreline Books/Norton, £5.95) is Evelyn Scott's 1921 trail-blazing suburban psychodrama of a family trapped by meaningless money-making and the demands of house, men and children. Relationships are soured by possessiveness and guilt, and the whole wretched business is shored up by the life-denying ideologies of a despiritualised puritanism. This is no feminist tract: the men suffer as desperately as the women, indeed are driven by withering emotional blackmail to make meaningless work an escape from the hell of home. A flawed book perhaps: the heroine conveniently succumbs to an unspecified psychosomatic illness complicated by childbirth and towards the end the imagery is tainted with a Poe-ish flavour of nightmare gothic characteristic of much American writing. Nevertheless, worth reprinting: not least as a bench mark by which to judge the thousands that have followed it.

Kathryn Kramer's **A Handbook for Visitors from Outer Space** (Faber, £4.95) is in a different tradition: with an opening section labelled Afterword *and* Preface your suspicion that this is an 'art' novel is confirmed when you find that the conventional narrative is intercut with descriptions of a surrealist non-war. The framework is a cat's cradle of a tale, that of Cyrus

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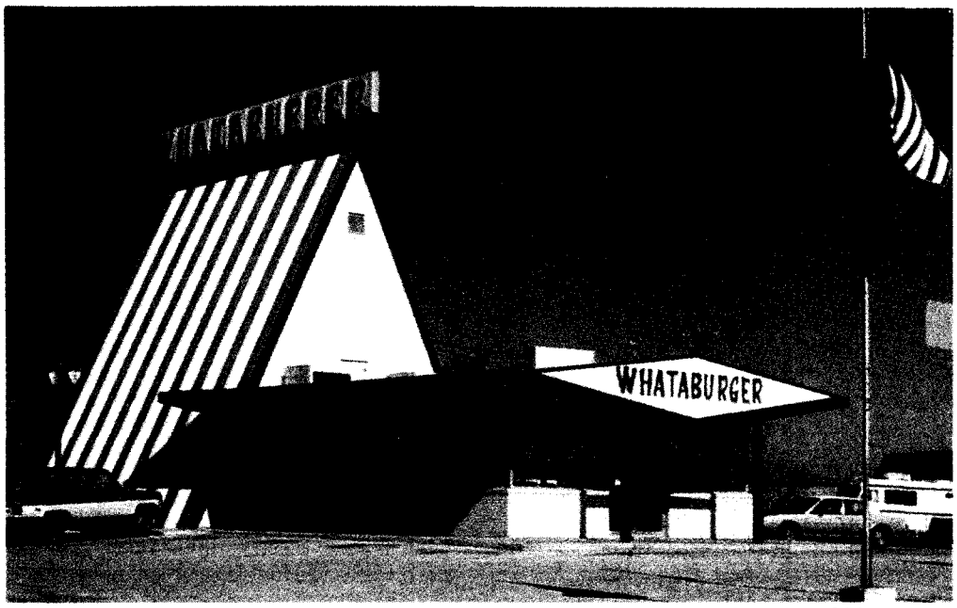

'By the middle of the Seventies, restaurants recorded an entirely different mood from that of 20 years before. Americans felt more in need of solace than of stimulation. The country was dispirited, and it wore its feelings on the roadside.' Philip Langdon, author of ORANGE ROOFS, GOLDEN ARCHES: THE ARCHITECTURE OF THE AMERICAN CHAIN RESTAURANT (Michael Joseph, £17.95) usually goes easier on the generalisations, but still finds a few fascinating routes to America's heart through the corporate suppliers to its stomach. The subtitle's an understatement, and the photos a lot more than stylish nostalgia: restaurant design — from turn-of-the-century Harvey Houses through Pig Stands (slogan: 'Eat a Pig Sandwich') and the spick and span mediaevalism of White Castles to new image Burger Kings — here incorporates technology, economics and sociology. Taylorism, self-service and the one-arm cafeteria (no tables); Chock Full O'Nuts and the triumph of modernism; drive-ins and delinquency; Vietnam and the browning of the fast-food joint: choose your thesis from the signs along the highway, but beware the ones that flash — 'They literally burn your ad into the minds of the people,' claimed a 1907 trade ad. And remember the fateful words of Wendy's chief architect, ushering in a whole new era: 'People will eat lunch in a dinner place, but they won't eat dinner in a lunch place.' A feast of ideas. Take one home. (Malcolm Imrie)

Quince, a youth blessed with Candide-like perceptions and incestuous forbears who may be exiled royalty and who may be the 'Visitors' of the title. Much of it is energetic, funny and moving but, in the end, that plot strangles it. Barth and Salinger are never far from Kathryn Kramer's shoulder and there's a whiff of semiotics in the air: I suspect she believes a novel says itself and that's it.

Not so **Safe Houses** (Penguin, £3.95) which Lynne Alexander has firmly placed in history, that of Raoul Wallenburg, the heroic Swede who saved thousands of Jews in Budapest in 1944 and who disappeared into the Russian gulag. But this is no *Schindler's Ark* — Wallenburg remains a shadowy figure. At the book's centre are Jack Baum, Viennese pastry cook, and Gerda, a Hungarian courtesan, both now surviving, coincidentally, in the same block of Brooklyn flats. They have in common the Hotel Majestic where Eichmann planned the Final Solution and Wallenburg did what he could to stop him. The climax comes with the creation of the Wallenburg myth in the late Seventies, and its exploitation by thousands of Americans right down to the President himself. It destroys Gerda's pathetic daughter, Gerda makes a bomb out of it, and Baum, the most successful and sympathetic of Alexander's creations, is finally blessed with an understanding of his own humanity through it. With some success, *Safe Houses* attempts an honest look at some of our darkest places and asserts the value of a stoic generosity in spite of them.

Stoic generosity is not enough: the following novels, all published by Heinemann Educational Books in their African and Caribbean Writers series, go triumphantly beyond it, asserting a humanism which responds to the horrors we inflict on each other not with resignation but with anger, and faith that these things need not be so. **God's Bits of Wood** by Sembene Ousmane (£3.95) was first published 25 years ago and has, abroad if not in this country, the deserved status of a classic. It tells, with the all-embracing confidence of an author who is sure of himself and the truth and value of what he has to say, the story of the Dakar-Niger railway workers' strike of 1947 and the vital role of the women of Thiés who marched 60 miles to Dakar and finally forced the French to accept not only their demands but their right to live polygamously. This is no dull epic of social realism: every page is vibrant with variety of life, and every character — and there are tens if not hundreds — leaps off the page with deftly suggested individuality. This lies at the heart of a book whose aim is to assert the necessity of collective action while celebrating individual uniqueness.

On a smaller scale, but no less powerfully, **Frangipani House** (£3.50) is as securely rooted in a perception of reality that acknowledges the worst but triumphantly asserts the best in us. Beryl Gilroy's book is the tale of Mama King, put into an old people's home by children and grandchildren who have left the Caribbean to work abroad. The first 50 pages are heart-searing as Mama King struggles to cope with the unthinking cruelty of the staff, the dreadful helplessness of being forced to do nothing after a lifetime of activity, and with the humiliations, mental and physical, that come with tired old age. Frangipani House, typical of 'homes' all over the western world, is on the point of winning, of turning her into a mindless vegetable, when a visit from a grandson resurrects her almost vanquished spirit. With the cunning of the very old she absconds with a troupe of mendicants and sets in train the events which restore her to a life of dignity. One unusual criticism: it is too short. Not just the story of Mama King's battle with Frangipani House is here, but her whole life as well, and that of her children and grandchildren and neighbours, and a further 50 pages is not enough.

Eve, the wife of the minister of an ecstatic church in Trinidad, also tells with apparent simplicity a powerful story. In **The Wine of Astonishment** (£3.50) her creator, Earl Lovelace, recounts the history of the church's persecution, of Ivan the local boy who makes it as a corrupt politician and of Bolo the champion stickfighter, brutalised by prison and finally shot down by the police. But it is also the story of a proud community whose vital culture is fragmented into a struggle for individual survival by the forces of colonial repression and exploitation. The message is clear: two possible leaders fail because the people have ceased to be a people and can no longer be led as a people. Again I cannot recommend this novel highly enough.

One thing must be said. By appearing under the Heinemann Educational imprint and as part of its Caribbean Series, this novel, like its two companions here, is doubly ghettoised right from the start: don't read me unless you are a black GCSE student. Better it should come thus than not at all; but, with the other two, it belongs alongside the very best of modern writing in every decent bookshop in the land. And that's not all. It is preceded in this edition by an academic Foreword. This is a horror for two reasons. It makes out of living literature a puzzle to be explicated, a text to be studied. Moreover it ignores the very explicit radical message and substitutes for it a load of crap about redemptive suffering. Another proof, if one was needed, that Tories who believe that literary criticism is a waste of money and time are foolish Tories. □

Julian Rathbone's fifteenth thriller, Zdt, *set in the rain forests of Costa Rica and Nicaragua, has just been published by Heinemann.*

NICARAGUA

Little wars

Richard Weekes

With the Contras
CHRISTOPHER DICKEY *Faber* £12.50

AS *WASHINGTON POST* correspondent for Central America between 1980 and 1983, Christopher Dickey was among that band of

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(largely American) journalists who gravitated to the region just as Ronald Reagan was preparing to enter the White House. A brutal civil war raged in El Salvador. Military junta begat military junta in Guatemala and Honduras. In post-revolutionary Nicaragua, the Sandinistas trod an increasingly Marxist path. Back in Washington, the ideologues surrounding the incoming president were talking of 'treating friends as friends, and enemies as enemies'. To the reporters in the field — the jocks of war — sparks seemed about to fly in US foreign policy for the first time since Vietnam. Something was going to happen.

Yet, for some time after Reagan took office, it was unclear just what was happening. Dickey tells of a party in Tegucigalpa, Honduras, in December 1981 (at which this writer was also present), given by the new US ambassador, John Negroponte, to celebrate the handover of power from the Honduran military to the elected civilian government of Dr Roberto Suazo Cordova. In trooped the ministers of the new government to chat uneasily with the assembled hacks. These men supposedly represented the new 'democratic' power in the country, but they signally failed to upstage a small, brooding figure dressed in black who held court on the subject of 'subversion' in the middle of the room: General Gustavo Alvarez, shortly to become head of the Honduran armed forces.

A few months later it became clear that Negroponte and Alvarez had something else to celebrate that night: the start of the secret war against the Sandinistas. With CIA funding, Argentine training and Honduran blind-eye turning, a motley collection of disaffected peasants, cattle rustlers and former foot soldiers of the Somoza National Guard who had crossed into Honduras to escape the Revolution were linked up with those Somoza officers who had made it to Miami and set up in camps along the remote Honduras-Nicaragua border. The Contras were off and running.

Written as a racy thriller — as the son of poet James Dickey, Christopher Dickey takes care over his literary credentials — the narrative jumps from Capitol Hill to Tegucigalpa safe house, from Daniel Ortega's office to Miami bar. Dickey tells of an almost fatal trip through the jungle with a band of Contras and of his meeting with the figure at the centre of the book, Suicida, a bandit turned anti-communist who was eventually executed by the Contras because he killed too many of his own men.

Yet quite the best part of the book is Dickey's painstaking and unrivalled reconstruction — from CIA, US government and Contra sources — of how the secret war was set in motion and of how, once started, its own logic has drawn the Administration in ever deeper. Back in 1982, the Contras were presented to the American people as a sort of 'verification' unit, a means of stopping the flow of arms to the Salvadorean rebels. Then there was talk of 'symmetry', of 'trading one little war for another little war'. They were a pressure point, that could be turned on and off, to force democracy on the Sandinistas. Now the euphemisms have been swept aside; it is clear the Contras believe their job is to take power in Managua.

Dickey's account finishes at the end of 1983, before Congress decided to go open with the war and put up $100 million for funding. Yet Dickey offers little evidence that the Contras — cleaned up, retrained and rearmed though they now may be — have anything like what it will take to win the war. As in Vietnam, sooner or later the US options will come down to double or quit.

At the time of Vietnam, Robert Lowell wrote a despairing lament for America's children, whose destiny he foresaw was 'to fall in small war on the heels of small war'. Barring a few embarrassing exceptions, like the colleagues of Eugene Hasenfus, the dead are no longer American, but the small wars still are. □

GREENS

Malignant growth

Peter Tatchell

The Living Economy
ed. PAUL EKINS *Routledge* £8.95

OBSERVING the recent season of party conferences, what struck me as truly remarkable was the degree of underlying economic consensus which is shared by the Conservative, Labour, Liberal and Social Democratic parties.

Despite their Keynesian and monetarist variations, all four parties remain wedded to the fundamental principles of orthodox economic doctrine — at a time when orthodox economics is in deep crisis, increasingly the cause rather than the solution to global economic disorder, disadvantage and dependency. This crisis, which none of the main political parties adequately acknowledges let alone has answers to, is succinctly summed up in *The Living Economy*:

> Economics is at an impasse. Its instruments are blunted. Its direction is confused . . . Investment doesn't bring down unemployment. Neither does growth . . . Third World indebtedness aborts world development and threatens to topple the international financial system. New technologies dominate people rather than liberating them. The natural environment is deteriorating rapidly world-wide and its resources are under unprecedented pressure . . . Even as technological change promises virtually unlimited production, the most basic material human needs still go unmet . . . The very assumptions which form the basis of conventional economics are now unsound.

Under the editorship of Paul Ekins, director of The Other Economic Summit (TOES) and former general secretary of the Green Party, *The Living Economy* brings together essays by more than 40 writers from Europe, the United States and the Third World, including John Galtung, Susan George, Herman Daly and Wangari Maathai. Largely stimulated by ideas which came out of the TOES conferences of 1984 and 1985, it offers both a withering critique of conventional economics and a challenging exposition of the *emerging*, humanly satisfying and environmentally sustainable New Economics. I emphasise the word emerging because, as Ekins freely admits, the New Economics is still in its formative stages; not yet a fully developed and coherent doctrine, and rather better at debunking traditional economics than presenting a wholeheartedly convincing alternative.

Nowhere is this debunking more powerful than in *The Living Economy's* assault on the orthodox assumption — shared by the leaders of the big four parties — that economic growth is an inherently good thing. It is not.

The relentless pursuit of economic expansion is more like a disease than a cure. It results in rapidly diminishing stocks of natural resources and near-irreversible environmental degradation. It is heavily based on production which is socially useless (armaments) or highly inefficient (planned commodity obsolescence). Its context is increasing unemployment, poverty, ill-health and crime, and a widening gulf between North and South. And it generates a harsh, grasping ethos of self-interest, greed and competitiveness. Ultimately, indefinite economic growth is both physically impossible, since we live on a planet with finite resources, and morally indefensible, given that it is largely at the expense of the Third World, future generations and other species. All this may seem obvious, but politicians — preoccupied with a quick economic fix and short-term electoral advantage — are loath to acknowledge it.

The other very potent argument in *The Living Economy* concerns the inadequacy of orthodox economic indicators. GNP, for example, ignores the contribution of voluntary community work, domestic labour and the informal 'black' economy. It doesn't take into account the cost of economic growth in terms of a declining resource base, community dislocation, environmental contamination and damage to health. Indeed, according to conventional economics, policies to protect public health, such as safety regulations and pollution controls, are costs and constraints on expansion. Worse still, GNP measures sickness rather than health. The sicker a society and the more it spends on drugs and other medical treatments, the greater the GNP and the healthier the economy.

A further flaw in GNP as an indicator of economic welfare is that, since it only measures aggregate output, it doesn't show the form of production or the distribution of consumption. Thus, an increase in GNP may not necessarily indicate improved economic well-being for the general population since increased production could simply be the result of expanded arms manufacture or be swallowed up in the form of luxury consumption by the rich.

These essays excel in such assaults on the premises of orthodox economics. Where they are less persuasive is in the second half of the book, which maps out the alternative New Economics — holistic, trans-disciplinary and sustainable. Amongst the ideas, of variable credibility and practicality, are proposals for cooperative land banks, local currencies, social accounting (including resource audits and environmental impact assessments), basic income schemes, community banking, nuisance and conservation taxes, new local economic orders, workers and consumers cooperatives and ecological codes of conduct. Many of these prescriptions will, of course, be dismissed by orthodox economists and politicians. However, for the open-minded, far-sighted and green-hearted, *The Living Economy* demonstrates that the New Economics, whatever its present weaknesses, has plenty of theoretical and practical promise. □

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Slate of hand

John Ross, London

I wish to protest very strongly about the editing of the article 'The right's unwelcome embrace' (*NS* 17 October). An original article on the Labour Party NEC elections written by me was substantially cut, which not only affected the political points made, but literally rendered the article factually false.

The edited article implies that 80 per cent of the constituency parties voted for slates of either Labour Forward, the LCC or the Campaign Group. This is factually false. I stated, on the contrary, there is 'no evidence of widespread mechanical voting for slates' but that 'core support' could easily be recognised. The original article stated:

- 137 CLPs voted for the right wing's candidates McCluskie for Treasurer and 138 for Dunwoody for the women's section. 155 CLPs voted for both Ashley and Kaufman in the constituency section and not for the three distinctive Campaign Group candidates of Benn, Heffer and Scargill. The right wing's core vote could therefore accurately be put at 137,000-155,000.

- 226 constituencies, with 241,000 votes, had voted for all three of the Campaign Group/hard left's distinctive candidates of Benn, Heffer, and Skinner. Eric Heffer, the lowest placed Campaign Group candidate, had received 251,000 votes. The Campaign Group/hard left core vote therefore could be put at 241,000.

- LCC support was harder to measure as there was much greater cross voting. Only one constituency had voted a straight LCC straight. Only 12 constituencies voted for Cook, Blunkett, and Meacher, and none for Benn, Heffer and Skinner. 53 CLPs, with 57,000 votes had voted for Cook, Blunkett and Meacher and only one for Benn, Heffer and Skinner. An alternative way to calculate the LCC slate was to look at Cook's vote — as he appeared only on the LCC slate. Of Cook's 207,000 votes 78,000 came from CLPs voting for both Ashley and Kaufman — i.e. basically right-wing constituencies, and 34,000 from CLPs voting for at least four Campaign Group candidates including both Benn and Skinner — i.e. either hard left or 'mixed' constituences. This left 95,000 votes for LCC or 'mixed' constituencies. LCC support should therefore be estimated at between 57,000 to a rather generous 95,000.

It should also be noted that the percentage figures for voting for women and black candidates are in each case calculated on the top estimated votes for the political currents.

Hugo — yes, but . . .

Theresa FitzGerald, London NW1

Anyone who can reach for 'social worker' as a term of abuse is operating so far off my wavelength that any attempt at reasoned dialogue is probably doomed from the outset. Still, I'd like Fiona Pitt-Kethley (Letters 17 Oct.) to explain just how my request for a TV critic 'capable of actually *liking* the medium' can translate into a call for censorship and 'a table-thumping column from Mrs Whitehouse'.

Meanwhile, we have Hugo Williams smugly admitting he couldn't quite fathom the plot of *Paradise Postponed* because he kept channel-hopping over to *St Elsewhere* (*NS* 17 Oct.). Hard to imagine similar confessions from any of the other *NS* critics — Judith Williamson, say nipping out midway through *Blood Red Roses* to catch a reel or two of *Basil the Great Mouse Detective*. But then, it's only TV, isn't it?

Sure, disgust is a natural part of criticism. But it's not the whole of it — or it shouldn't be. Any restaurant critic — to take up Ms Pitt-Kethley's metaphor — who referred to restaurants *en masse* as 'shit-heaps' (the equivalent of Hugo Williams wittily describing his TV set as 'the pukey') should perhaps think of choosing another job.

Mike Belbin, London SW3

Should a poet be a TV critic? Should Ned Sherrin discuss the Labour Party's chances or Peter Kellner review Ted Hughes? Certainly, if they bring a serious and informed *interest* to the subject. Like Fiona Pitt-Kethley I can respect a restaurant critic who feels sick once in a while — but not one who plays with his food. Like Theresa FitzGerald I request: more TV *criticism* please.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement: *Stuart Bell replies to Peter Brooke*

It is of course true that the Unionist community has not supported the Anglo-Irish Agreement. But then that is why they were not consulted in its preparation. The latter-day Luddites who comprise Unionist politicians have never had any interest in extending the democratic franchise of participation to the Nationalist community. It is for this reason they have been lumbered with the Anglo-Irish Agreement, which seeks to permit Nationalist aspiration to breathe through the Inter-Governmental Conference.

Peter Brooke (*NS* 17 October) states that there is no sign of the Nationalist community benefiting from the Agreement. As Seamus Mallon of the SDLP has recently pointed out, no Nationalist wishes either to return to pre-15 November, when the Agreement was signed. For the Nationalist community now has a say in its own affairs. The last year has seen UDR men patrolling with the RUC, the Diplock Courts put into the Conference, supergrass trials coming to a discreditable end, a Police Complaints Board dealing with complaints about the RUC, a fund set up by the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand to attack the deprivation caused by terrorist activity, a future repeal of the Flags and Emblems Act, an attack on discrimination through new guidelines issued by the Fair Employment Agency, and the decision to tear down the Divis flats in West Belfast.

As for the Unionist community, their leaders are split as to what they want for Northern Ireland. By their non-attendance they have killed off the Northern Ireland Assembly. By their refusal to conduct ordinary council business they have threatened the welfare of their own communities by making it more difficult for money to be available for local projects. They have abandoned Westminister as a forum to seek the redress of grievance, leaving it to the Opposition Front Bench to press the government for more funds and more projects for Northern Ireland.

Nor have the Unionists decided what they want for the future. Is it a return to the old-style Protestant Ascendancy? Do they want integration with the rest of the United Kingdom under the new-fangled name of equal citizenship? Or do they want an Independent Ulster? The national interest of Great Britain has never lain in the creation of an unviable state in the North-East corner of Ireland. Equal citizenship is no more desired now than it was in the past (ask those integrationists if they want the Abortion Act 1967 extended to Northern Ireland). And devolution for Unionists is a return to majority rule, with the setting up of six committees to run Northern Ireland, with the chairmanship of two of these committees vested one in the SDLP and the other in the Alliance Party.

The Anglo-Irish Agreement with its emphasis on the discussion of political, security, legal and justice matters — and cross-border co-operation — provides an outlet for the expression of Nationalist grievances while awaiting a united Ireland. The Agreement has the support of the British Parliament and the British people. Equally, it has the support of the Irish Dail and the Irish people. Even Charles Haughey, Taoiseach in waiting, only threatens to renegotiate it rather than tear it up. Perhaps he too has seen the advantage of a clause in the Agreement which states that, in the event of a majority of those who live in the North consenting to a united Ireland, a British government will not stand in the legislative way.

The Agreement is lodged with the United Nations and is the first treaty between the South and Westminster since 1921 dealing with the North. The Agreement will be used by a future Labour government to build harmonisation into the laws of Ireland, North and South, so that the prospect of a united Ireland appears less hostile and less frightening to those in the North who are within the Unionist community. Their consent cannot and will not be abrogated to achieve a united Ireland. Nor will Labour countenance an Ireland united down the wrong end of a gun barrel. But for a future Labour government this is a time of opportunity rather than a time of crisis, and one which the Party fully intends to use when it wins the next election.

Stuart Bell MP is the Labour Party's Junior Spokesperson for Northern Ireland.

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UNION OF CONSTRUCTION, ALLIED TRADES & TECHNICIANS requires a SECRETARY at its headquarters in South London. Salary £7,003.23 pa inc allowances. 33 hour week, flexi. Applications should be addressed to: The General Secretary, UCATT House, 177 Abbeyville Road, London SW4 9RL and must be received by 31 October 1986. N43.2

AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL BRITISH SECTION

DIRECTOR

Amnesty International British Section requires a new Director to start in April 1987. Amnesty International is a world-wide voluntary human rights movement that works for the release of Prisoners of Conscience, seeks fair trial for political prisoners and opposes torture and capital punishment in all cases. The British Section is one of 44 national Sections and carries out campaigning and fundraising work in the United Kingdom.

The Director is the chief executive officer, responsible for presenting AI's concerns to governments, MPs, the media and the public, for the management of 18 paid and approximately 60 volunteer staff, for fundraising and finances, and for providing information to its 31,000 members, 1,200 affiliated organisations and 250 voluntary groups. The Director is responsible to the governing Council, and provides advice and administrative support to it.

Candidates must have *absolute integrity, sound political judgement, leadership and experience at senior management level in supervising staff, controlling finances, and initiating and implementing action programmes.* The successful applicant must be willing to work some evenings and weekends, and be willing to travel.

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GREEK MAN, 41, academic and journalist in Leeds, seeks intelligent, warm, sensuous lady to share fun, friendship, conversation, romance, social interests and enjoyment of arts. Box (43)3951. N43.15

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MALE, 49, tall, slim, Sussex Coast, no ties, seeks slim female anywhere, any status, for friendship & whatever else ensues. Photo/phone please. Box (43)3929. N43.19

MAN, 31, recently unattached, practical, non-materialistic, unpretentious, ex-drop out, fancies having a drink with capable woman, 25-35. W. Yorks/E. Lancs. Photo appreciated. Box (43)3934. N43.20

MALE TEACHER, London/Yorkshire, 39, single, non-smoker, fairly attractive, wishes to meet attractive woman for walks, theatre, cinema, etc. No objection to children. Photo appreciated. Box (43)3957. N43.21

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PROFESSIONAL MALE, 52, 5'9", slim, Asian, NHS consultant, light brown, liberal, with wide interests, nature, travel, the arts, Eastern philosophy, separated — seeks independent female, below 50, slim or medium, for close caring relationship, race immaterial. Preferably North West/West Midlands/West Yorks. Box (43)3959. N43.22

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SOUTH AFRICAN born Muslim (54), university educated, resident in UK since 1965, naturalised British Citizen, wishes to meet unencumbered lady, 40 or younger, professionally or financially independent, with a view to close, affectionate relationship — and who knows? North London. Box (42)3897. N42.21

TALL PROF. man, calming, caring, good listener, 56, seeks warm, sensitive, attractive woman, forties. Likes: music, people, countryside. East of St. Paul's/Essex. Box (43)3955. N43.27

TYNESIDE: AFFECTIONATE female companion sought by man who has just passed the big four-O, and feels need of compatible woman to share second half of a hectic existence. Middle-left outlook, artistic inclinations, likes outdoor life, affable nature, good working order. Write David Box (42)3911. N42.23

TYPICAL SCORPION, untypical company director, 40, tall, slim, attractive, educated, leftish, married, but restless, seeks uncomplicated — but ongoing relationship with intelligent, attractive female, for restaurants, theatres etc., on weekly London visits. Box (43)3937. N43.28

W. YORKSHIRE male, 30, paralysed from chest down, but still sane, still okay. I'm a graduate, driver, writer of fiction, eater out, theatre goer. All I want is a beautiful, intelligent woman, 20-40ish. Photo please, will be returned. Box (43)3956. N43.29

WARM, HAPPY, caring professional man, 6'2", 42, seeks attractive, affectionate companion for relaxed enjoyment of music, food & wine, friends, sports and the arts. John. E. Midlands. Box (42)3916. N42.24

WARM, LIVELY woman, 40, socialist, CND, seeks similar relaxed unattached man. Interests: music, films, reading and talking. London preferred. Box (43)3952. N43.30

WEST MIDLANDS: male, 31, seeks female 20-35. To share evenings out, good food, music, cinema etc. Style and sense of humour essential. Trust optional. Box (43)3935. N43.31

WOODY ALLENISH cosmopolitan man, 51, London, *interests include visual arts, National Trust,* orientalia, Bach, stimulating conversation, Third World travel, seeks attractive, lively woman, similar tastes. Box (43)3941. N43.32

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MEETINGS

THEOSOPHY: S.a.e. for pamphlet, book list, programme. Free talks or discussions, Sundays 8-9pm ULT, 62 Queen's Gardens, London W2 3AL. N40.6

UNIVERSITY OF LONDON. The 1986 Creighton Lecture entitled: "Absolutism: The History Of An Idea" will be given by Professor J. H. Burns (Professor Emeritus of the History of Political Thought in the University of London) at 5.30pm on Monday 10 November 1986 at the University of London, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU. Admission free, without ticket. N43.3

SEMINARS

German Historical Institute, London
Tuesday 28 October, 5 p.m.
Prof. Norman Gash (St Andrews)
The 'Island Factor'
in British History
17 Bloomsbury Square
London WC1A 2LP
01-404 5486
Tea from 4.30 p.m.
Seminar starts 5 p.m.

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CHANGES TO *NEW STATESMAN* CLASSIFIEDS

The *New Statesman* has undergone a metamorphosis and this has had repercussions for the classified pages.
The column widths are now as follows:

1 column	47mm
2 columns	99mm
3 columns	149mm
4 columns	202mm

Our new printing schedule means that we have had to bring our copy deadline forward by one day. **All copy must now be received by 12 noon on the Monday of the week of publication.**

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AGENDA

FOR DETAILS CALL DAVID JONES 01-251 5487

MON 27 OCT

BENEATH THE WHITE COAT. A seminar series on Science & Politics in the 1980s organised by the British Society for Social Responsibility in Science. The Marquis of Granby, Chandos Place, WC2. This week: Hazel Downing Health Hazards of VDUs. Details: 01-607 9615.

HOW WE CAN FEED THE WORLD. Public meeting, Muswell Hill Library, London N10, 8.15pm. Questions & discussion. Admission free. The Socialist Party of GB (Enfield & Haringey branch).

FRI 31 OCT

SHAW SOCIETY. Professor Dan H. Lawrence on "Bernard Shaw and the Uses of History." Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Coffee 6.30pm. Lecture 7 pm.

THE SUZY PAINE MEMORIAL LECTURE

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SAT 8 NOV

SPANISH CIVIL WAR DAY SCHOOL. Poetry, films, exhibition. 10.30am-7pm. Brighton Polytechnic, Grand Parade. Speakers: Jack Jones, Margot Heinemann, James Jump. Cost £3/£2 unwaged. Applications/information from: Frank Gray, Dept. of Art History, Brighton Polytechnic. Tel. (0273) 604141 extn. 245.

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CHILE

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Conway Hall, Red Lion Square (Holborn Tube)

Veronica Denegri (*mother of Chilean youth burnt to death by troops*).

Denis Healey MP

Helen Garner (*Women's delegation to Chile*).

Alan Beith MP

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FOOD

Venetian venialities

Anna Del Conte

VENICE IS THE PLACE everyone remembers for ever. They remember its dream-like views, and they linger over memories of places and palaces, of sights and smells (good or bad) . . . and of tastes. One of the most vivid memories is usually of a visit to the Rialto market. The multi-coloured patterns of fish, the piles of purple aubergines and of red and yellow peppers, the array of morning-picked wild salads, the fragrance of apricots and velvety peaches, all these are there to be enjoyed today, just as they were many centuries ago.

Then, as now, the goods were laid out at the Rialto, some brought by gondolas from farms and gardens across the lagoon, others by ships coming from the East. It was due to these products of the East, and to another unchanging factor — the shrewdness of the Venetians — that Venice became, almost 1,000 years ago, the richest and most powerful state in Europe. At the time of the Crusades the Venetians were able to buy sugar and spices at very keen prices, having obtained special terms from the various Sultans. These products from the East, and the Byzantine influence that came with them, were assimilated into the local ways of cooking and thus the Venetian cuisine was born.

Although the new gastronomy spread from Venice to France, Venice remained the Mecca of luxurious living until France took the lead in the 18th century. It was in 1796 that France's most notorious citizen took possession of Venice, thus putting an end to the glories of *La Serenissima*. But serene the city remains, and it still enjoys the gastronomic booty of its former empire. Many dishes contain spices, sultanas, almonds and pine-nuts, and have an oriental flavour.

There is another and very different side to Venetian cooking, for it can be simple and almost peasant in nature. Fish and seafood are usually prepared without fuss; they are grilled, roasted or boiled and served with a light sauce based on olive oil, relying on their freshness for a delicious end result.

Venetian cooking includes many foods and recipes from its hinterland, among which polenta and the various risottos are the most important. Vegetables, especially beans, are a staple. And the Venetians have a partiality for sweet things, yet again showing the eastern connection.

Radicchio rosso alla Trevisana

Grilled red radicchio

The radicchio available in this country is the radicchio of Chioggia, the fishing port at the southern end of the Venetian lagoon. It is a comparatively new species that can be cultivated all the year round. The other two species, both from towns to the north of Venice and both more highly regarded, are radicchio of Treviso, with longer and crisper leaves and a sweet flavour, and radicchio of Castelfranco, which is similar in shape to that of Chioggia but more delicate in taste.

Grilling radicchio brings out its bitter flavour, which I personally find most agreeable. This dish is an ideal accompaniment to any roast or grilled meat, especially pork, or it can be served as an antipasto. The amounts below are enough for four people as a starter or six as an accompaniment.

4 radicchio heads, about 700g (1½lb)
75ml (3fl oz) olive oil
salt and freshly ground black pepper

Preheat the grill.

Discard the bruised outside leaves of the radicchio heads, then cut the heads into quarters and wash and dry them thoroughly.

Place the radicchio in the grill pan, spoon over the oil and season with salt and a generous amount of pepper. Cook under a grill for 10 minutes, taking care to turn the pieces of radicchio so that they do not burn.

Transfer the radicchio to a dish and spoon over the juice from the grill pan. Serve hot or cold.

Sfogi in saor

Sole in sweet and sour sauce

This recipe, which is of eastern origin, is one of the traditional dishes eaten during the *Festa del Redentore*. On the evening of this day, the third Sunday in July, all Venice turns out to celebrate the Holy Redeemer with a spectacular firework display and an equally spectacular feast. The feast is partaken of on every kind of boat, as well as on the quay-sides of the Giudecca and the Zattere. Apart from *sfogi in saor*, the traditional fare is roast duck, stewed beans, baked peaches with *amaretti* and jam stuffing and iced water melon. And, as the fireworks light up the sky, bowls of *bovoleti agio e ogio* — small snails dressed with garlic and oil — are handed round to set the seal of enjoyment on the occasion.

The dish should not be eaten until at least 24 hours after preparation. It keeps well in the refrigerator for up to a week. The amounts below will serve three people as a main course or four as a starter.

450g (1lb) sole fillets, cut in half lengthways
25g (1oz) flour
salt and freshly ground black pepper
150ml (¼ pint) olive oil
225g (8oz) onion, very finely sliced
1 celery stick, thinly sliced
45ml (3tbsp) dry white wine
45ml (3tbsp) wine vinegar
30ml (2tbsp) pomegranate juice or lemon juice
50g (2oz) sultanas
25g (1oz) pine-nuts (optional)
2.5ml (¼ tsp) ground cinnamon
pinch of ground ginger
pinch of ground coriander
2 cloves
2 bay leaves

Coat each fillet in the flour, seasoned with salt and pepper, and shake to remove excess. Heat 100ml (4floz) of the oil in a frying pan. When hot, slide in the fillets, a few at a time, and fry gently for about 5 minutes on each side, until golden. Drain the fish on kitchen paper, then place in a shallow serving dish large enough to hold them all in a single layer.

Heat the remaining oil in a frying pan and sauté the vegetables for about 15 minutes, until soft and slightly coloured. Season with salt and pepper, and add the wine, vinegar and pomegranate or lemon juice. Raise the heat and cook until the liquid is reduced by half. Pour over the fish and sprinkle with the sultanas, pine-nuts, spices and bay leaves.

Cover the dish and refrigerate for 48 hours.

Remove the dish from the refrigerator 2 hours before serving so as to return it to room temperature.

Risotto alla paesana

Risotto with vegetables

This is a very old recipe from the north of Italy. It has been made famous by the Cipriani restaurant on the island of Torcello in the Venetian lagoon where it is served, with slight alterations, as *Risotto Primavera* — Spring risotto.

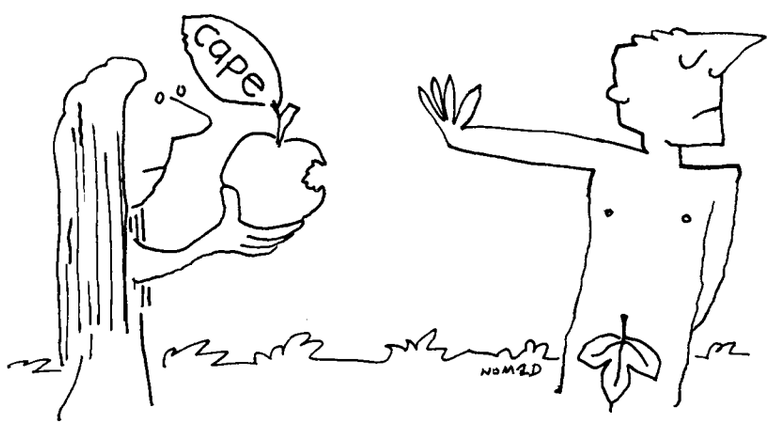
The vegetables must be added at different stages, so that they are all tender, but not mushy, by the time the rice is ready. In this, as in any risotto, it is essential to use Italian rice, because it absorbs the liquid in which it is cooked, yet remains firm. The amounts below will serve four people.

1.2 litres (2 pints) home-made stock, or 2 meat bouillon cubes dissolved in the same quantity of water
50g (2oz) butter
15ml (1tbsp) olive oil or vegetable oil
1 medium onion, finely sliced
250g (9oz) Italian rice
1 medium carrot, cut into small cubes
2 celery sticks, with outer threads removed and cut into thin slices
100g (4oz) fresh shelled peas or frozen petits pois, thawed
2 ripe tomatoes, skinned, seeded and coarsely chopped
1 medium courgette, cut into small cubes
50g (2oz) Parmesan cheese, freshly grated
salt
freshly ground black pepper

Bring the stock to simmering point and keep it simmering.

Put half the butter, the oil and the onion in a heavy-based saucepan and sauté gently until the onion is soft and translucent, but not brown.

Add the rice and cook for 1 minute, stirring constantly so as to coat the rice with the fat. Pour over about 200ml (⅓ pint) of the stock and cook, stirring the whole time, until nearly all the stock has been absorbed. Then add another 150ml (¼ pint) of the simmering stock and



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continue stirring. Regulate the heat so that the rice cooks steadily at a lively simmer.

When the rice has cooked for about 10 minutes, add the carrot, celery, fresh peas (if used) and the tomatoes. Mix well and keep adding small amounts of stock as soon as the rice begins to look dry. Keep stirring.

After a further 10 minutes, add the courgette and, if you are using frozen ones, the peas. Cook, stirring very frequently, and adding more simmering stock as necessary. Do not add too much stock in one go; if the rice is nearly done, add no more than 4 tablespoons at a time. The risotto should be ready in about 25 minutes.

When the rice is tender, but *al dente*, draw off the heat and mix in the remaining butter and half the Parmesan. Taste and add salt if necessary (the stock might have been salty enough) and pepper. Allow the butter to melt completely, stir thoroughly and turn the risotto into a heated dish.

Serve at once, with the rest of the Parmesan in a bowl on the side. □

Apology

In printing Anna Del Conte's recipe for *Cassata Siciliana* in *NS* 26 September, we omitted a rather crucial section of the instructions. Following preparation of the ricotta mixture, the recipe should have continued: 'Mix thoroughly. Line an 18cm (7 inch) cake tin with greaseproof paper. Line the base and sides with some of the Madeira cake and moisten it with some of the remaining liqueur. Spoon in the *ricotta* mixture, cover with the remaining sliced cake and moisten with the remaining liqueur.' To readers who didn't notice, wrapped the unmixed ingredients in cling film and chilled them, we apologise. Still, it probably tasted good anyway.

Anna Del Conte's latest book, Pasta Perfect, *has just been published by Conran Octopus at £3.99.*

FIRST PERSON

Darkness at Montpelier Square

Adrianne Blue

IT IS TIME to slander the dead.

The double suicide of Cynthia and Arthur Koestler in 1983 haunts us, as the controversy in the *Observer* the past two months confirms. That exchange hinged on absolution for Arthur, who allowed his wife to die with him. But the issue is not Arthur. He was utterly consistent, an egomaniac, a pig to the end.

How, though, did Cynthia become slave to this Pharoh? And why did she — or they — decide just a few days before Arthur's long-planned suicide that she would accompany him into 'eternal life'?

At the time of their death, I interviewed their close friends, including Harold Harrison and Mary Benson. The conclusion I reached as to why Cynthia joined Arthur, who was painfully and terminally ill, in suicide, was not satisfying, but I think it is true.

There is just one compelling clue: ten days before the Koestlers killed themselves in London, Cynthia invited an old friend to dinner. The talk at dinner was of death.

Not of the death of either Koestler; rather, Cynthia — usually so self-effacing, private, shy, very rarely the centre of a conversation — talked intently about her father's suicide, in South Africa, more than 40 years before. She had been 13, an age at which girls tend to adore their fathers. He was a surgeon, well known, widely respected. He killed himself during a storm. Cynthia remembered the terrifying lightning, violent thunderclaps, the day suddenly going black. Some of that weather must have been emotional. 'It was like the end of the world,' she said. She was not given to overstatement.

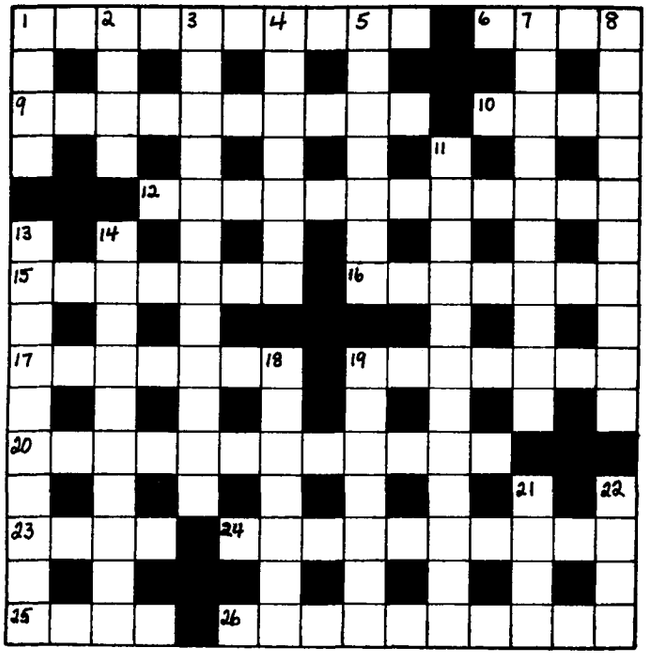
On 3 March 1983, the police found the Koestlers dead in their drawing room in Montpelier Square. No one who had known them was surprised or dismayed by Arthur's suicide. He was 77; leukaemia and Parkinson's disease were becoming shattering. He was vice president of the Voluntary Euthanasia Society.

But Cynthia, with her long, loose, blonde hair, her wistful but easy smile, a visibly young 55, was energetic, able. If she had cancer — which most doubt, despite George Mikes' original claim in the *Observer* — so far it was not seriously affecting her. She had a home, friends, intelligence, financial security. Why would she decide, 'I cannot live without Arthur, despite certain inner resources.' Why, in the purportedly post-feminist 1980s, would a woman choose to die with her husband?

Cynthia Jeffries met Arthur Koestler in France in the summer of 1949, when she was 22. *Darkness at Noon* had already made him famous. He was 44. Old enough to be her father. ▷

Weekend Crossword 1536

PRIZE: £10 Book Token for the first correct solution opened. Entries to Crossword 1536, New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU by first post 11 November.



Name_____

Address_____

ACROSS

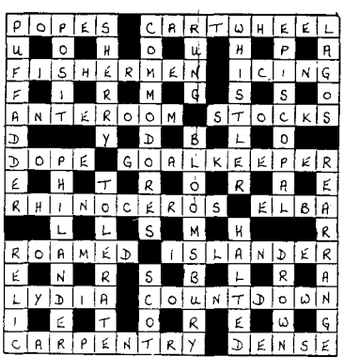
1. The management enters teams since there are places to put the trophies (10)
6. Footballer goes on foot (4)
9. Birds in turn seen in the fire (10)
10. Country which belongs to one of the larger international organisations (4)
12. In one list his MP may show potential lack of culture (12)
15. Hair in his mattress escapes easily (7)
16. In the intervals two of the parties present the issues (7)
17. Thinking of love and wasting away (7)
19. This takes part in flight and has a navigation system in the tail (7)
20. Astonishment at the tripe distributed by the party? (12)
23. Love gives painful back (4)
24. A stoic rite has developed into barbarian practices (10)
25. Animals to be found amidst the most up-to-date (4)
26. Newspaper companies they impress (10)

DOWN

1. Piece of furniture which is not quite as remote (4)
2. Town for business? (4)
3. Cheerful with liquor, just for a lark! (6,6)
4. Vessels for soldiers (7)
5. Furniture for theatre attendant (7)
7. Flippancy is essentially about a single focus of loyalty (10)
8. Non-performer who should win the fight? (10)
11. The January custom was altered if frost got in (12)
13. Feeling which makes broken hearts mope (10)
14. Plant which makes a poet right in the expectation (10)
18. The hard worker who was subsequently king? (7)
19. There is nothing in changing trains to provide fixed supplies (7)
21. Bearing of one surrounded by human beings (4)
22. God has two existences (4)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1534



Prizewinner to 1534

Mr D. Dixon
(Weymouth, Dorset)

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Cynthia, living in Paris with her mother, answered his ad in the *Herald Tribune* for a part-time secretary to type his new book. She got the job. Every week, she came to type a new instalment. 'I could hardly wait for the next one,' she wrote in an essay about Arthur. 'It reminded me of my childhood when every Thursday my father used to bring home my favourite comics . . . In no time I had read them and then had to wait another whole long week to see whether Pat the Pirate would have to walk the plank.'

Cynthia said she was in love with the job and fond of Arthur, even though he had 'a difficult temperament'. His friends say he was brilliant, demanding, domineering. He was married too.

When he and his wife moved to America they soon, and abruptly, sent for Cynthia to join them: 'In ten days I had given up my job and flat and was on my way.'

Arthur's wife divorced him; he womanised; Cynthia determinedly married someone else: briefly. In 1955, she and Arthur became permanent lovers. Ten years later they married.

She had long since made herself indispensable to him: cook, confidante, hostess, friend, typist, appointments secretary and perennial chief resident post-graduate student — an intelligent sounding-board for a great man's ideas. It was unlikely that Arthur, who had had two wives and many, many lovers, would ever choose to leave her.

'She lived entirely for him and through him,' says his editor and literary executor who knew Cynthia for 20 years. 'But no one can say she didn't live life to the full in the way *she* wanted to.'

'Their marriage,' says another friend, 'was almost impossibly close. Her devotion to him was like no other wife's I have ever known.'

These two witnesses, both urbane and decent literary gentlemen of a certain age, reveal, largely unwillingly — because they do not want to betray their dead friend Arthur — unease with their memory of him as lord and master and of Cynthia as obsequious wife.

Taking care of Arthur was her chosen profession. It was an old-fashioned choice. She was a deft cook, particularly of Hungarian cuisine — Arthur was Hungarian. She grew magnificent sunflowers in their garden: they reminded him of Hungary. When he became too ill to enjoy the garden, she stopped planting it.

There are no anecdotes of which she is the heroine; the stories all turn out to be about Arthur. Only the pet dog David — the one called Goliath had died of old age — was more hers than Arthur's. David was devoted to Cynthia. Two days before the suicide she had the dog put down. She told the vet she could not look after him properly now that her huband was so ill; she told the maid, who might have taken the dog, that David had been given to a friend.

Cynthia had found in Arthur Koestler the harbour she knew as child before the terrifying storm of her father's death, which had felt 'like the end of the world'. Anthropomorphically, she wanted to spare her own pet that disaster. She herself was unwilling to experience the end of the world twice.

There are those who believe she was a woman who knew how to love to a fault. I think she mistook self-immolation for love. □

Weekend competition

No 2947 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Sonnets, please, 'On first looking at *The Independent*'. By Wednesday 5 November.

No 2944 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Extracts from the thriller which Douglas Hurd is said to be writing about a murder in the Cabinet.

Report **By Rose Dorn**

Actually, the Home Secretary isn't the world's *worst* novelist; judging from his (admittedly co-authored) *War Without Frontiers*, he's a hell of a lot more entertaining than, for example, the ludicrous Archer. And alarmingly knowledgeable, as I recall, about the complexities of Europe's far left. What he doesn't do, though, is write in the style of Conan Doyle, Chandler or Agatha Christie: nor do any of you, but that seems to be what you were attempting. It's time to update our crime reading, isn't it? And now that the *NS* has Britain's only serious crime fiction critic as its house columnist, you've no more excuses for ignorance. *His* comments on your entries were unprintable. All *I've* got to say is that I'm sick to death of twee stories about politicians. Who gives a damn? One more joke about Tebbitt and bicycles and I'm off. A fiver each to these and it's more than you deserve. Shape up or ship out.

In another hour it would be dawn. The PM's hair grated gently on the bullet-proof glass as she rested her forehead against the cold window pane. The rain was still lashing down, smearing the lights of Downing Street across the night.

He was out there. Somewhere. Scheming, plotting, murder in his eyes. He'd tried once and he'd try again. The question was — How? As if there wasn't enough to do, what with the manifesto to write, the unpleasant business of Mark and the mechanic, and Willie Whitelaw's torso downstairs, blocking the waste disposal unit.

'Heseltine,' she breathed. 'You bastard! I'll get you.'

The rain beat against the window with a roar like a standing ovation.

HARVEY COX

The eyelids drooped, silver-lidded, wrinkled, reptilian. 'I am waiting,' she said.

Archer smiled. Sun filtered through the armoured-glass windows.

'*Any* of us could have manacled Norman to a push-bike before asphyxiating him with the appropriate pages of Hansard,' she persisted. 'But only a novelist of your calibre, Jeffrey, would have ensured that he was found with a red rose — er — where it was.'

'Perhaps I did you a favour?' Archer suggested.

'Perhaps,' she admitted. 'But you are ambitious, Jeffrey. And careless. The writer's cramp hand-spray you gave me — I saw the prototype at Porton.'

He paled, reaching for his tungsten-tipped Papermate — but the floor opened, precipitating him into a cellar full of crocodiles and golf clubs.

ALISON PRINCE

Sir Robert Armstrong glided down the corridor closely following the grizzly trail of blood-splashes from the Cabinet Office, where, slumped over the table, lay the body of 'Farmer' Prior, slain by a cruel blow from a curved blade.

Inexorably it led to the inner sanctum. He knocked lightly and entered. There she stood, waving a gory kukri.

'Ah, Sir Robert!' she cried, holding out the fell implement, 'Take this to the skivvies for cleaning.'

'Mr Prior has been murdered, Prime Minister.'

Mrs Thatcher sat at her desk and opened the day's eightieth despatch box.

'How tiresome. Set up an inquiry — you know the ropes.'

Nodding deferentially he glided out.

SEAN MCEVOY

Margaret, imperious in black lace, looks round the table.

'I've solved this so-called mystery!'

The colleagues — silent, attentive.

'If one discounts the wets . . .'

'As one always can!'

'Thank you, Norman. Any one of us could have killed poor Quintin.' She lets this sink in. 'But none of us is a mad fanatic.' A sour smile from Peter Walker.

'So none of us did!' Emphatic. Utterly convincing.

'Because he died at his post — at this very table — several months ago.'

A murmur of incredulity, instantly quelled.

'Sir Robert has checked the minutes. Quintin's last recorded utterance was in August.'

'Which would explain . . .'

'Precisely, Douglas! The pervasive odour of dissolution.'

A flash of those remarkable blue eyes. 'Bernard is putting out the story.'

FRANK DUNNILL

'We know,' Maggie whispered, 'that poor Norman was killed by an arrow with PIP inscribed on the shaft.'

'Wasn't that a character in *Great Expectations*?' Peter mused.

'And didn't John Mills play the part?' Willie cried, 'perhaps we should have him brought in.'

'It's an inside job,' said Maggie.

'One of us?' gasped Geoffrey, whey-faced.

'Spike-marks on the carpet,' she reminded them.

'Daley Thompson,' screamed Geoffrey, suddenly inspired.

'Now PIP could stand for Primus Inter Pares . . . doesn't that give you a clue?'

They appeared distressed with incomprehension.

'Who normally uses an arrow?' Maggie coaxed.

'Robin Hood?' Edwina ventured.

'A . . . R . . . C . . . H . . .' Maggie spelled encouragingly.

They banged their desk-lids with intemperate relief at the imagined solution.

'Archbishop of Canterbury,' they chanted in happy unison.

RUSSELL LUCAS

'You see, *everybody* hated him, Prime Minister.'

'Of *course* everybody hated him. Why else should I have employed him? Do try and be less Prior-witted.'

'Wringem obviously *knew* his murderer. They sat and chatted — and I swear the springs of that chair weren't bursting through the bottom yesterday.'

'Some fat ape then. Willie? But no — he couldn't stay awake long enough to croak anybody.'

'And when whoever it was hung Wringem from your husband's snuggery window, he didn't use the usual hangman's knot.'

'Oh?'

'No — it was a very old-fashioned mariner's knot.'

'So we're looking for a clapped out bladder of lard with yachting experience. Gentlemen, I know someone who fits — or at least can be fitted *up*.'

ANDREW MCEVOY

Incorporating 'The Nation', 'The Athenaeum' and 'The Week-end Review'. Registered as a newspaper. Typesetting by Tocatta Graphics, Tabard House, 116 Southwark Street, London SE1
Printed by QB Ltd, Sheepen Place, Colchester CO3 3LJ. Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co. Ltd at 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU.

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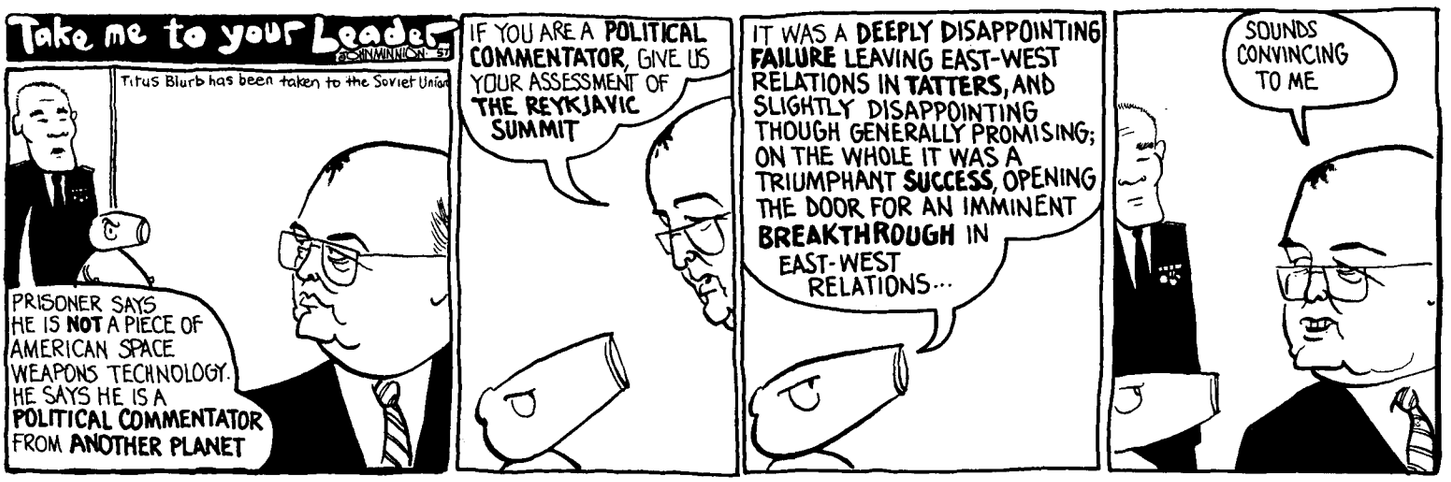
Take me to your Leader
Titus Blurb has been taken to the Soviet Union
PRISONER SAYS HE IS NOT A PIECE OF AMERICAN SPACE WEAPONS TECHNOLOGY. HE SAYS HE IS A POLITICAL COMMENTATOR FROM ANOTHER PLANET
IF YOU ARE A POLITICAL COMMENTATOR, GIVE US YOUR ASSESSMENT OF THE REYKJAVIC SUMMIT
IT WAS A DEEPLY DISAPPOINTING FAILURE LEAVING EAST-WEST RELATIONS IN TATTERS, AND SLIGHTLY DISAPPOINTING THOUGH GENERALLY PROMISING; ON THE WHOLE IT WAS A TRIUMPHANT SUCCESS, OPENING THE DOOR FOR AN IMMINENT BREAKTHROUGH IN EAST-WEST RELATIONS...
SOUNDS CONVINCING TO ME

Chess

WITH THE individual world championship process dominated by Soviet players, we shall have to look to the coming Olympiad to see how English chess measures up against them. The Olympiad, for teams of 4 with 2 reserves, is to be held in Dubai from 14 November to 2 December. The choice of venue — not that there was much choice, as it was the only bid for this costly event — created an inevitable problem over the participation of the Israeli team. They could not get visas. A compromise of sorts was suggested, by which they would have played by telex.

There is at least a precedent for this in Fischer's long-range participation in the memorable IV Capablanca Memorial of 1965. The US State Department refused to endorse his passport for the visit to Cuba, so his moves were transmitted from the Marshall Chess Club in New York and relayed to the board in Havana by Capablanca's son. The Israelis, however, rejected this arrangement — understandably enough, since it is quite contrary to the global jamboree spirit of an Olympiad. The Scandinavian federations have also declined to play. However, it seems unlikely that there will be much of a boycott, the general feeling being that, since the 1976 Olympiad was held in Haifa, holding the 1986 Olympiad in an Arab country merely evens the score.

The English team for Dubai is Miles, Nunn, Short, Chandler, Speelman and Flear. Mestel declined an invitation to play, but even in his absence the side is strong enough to hope for a repeat of the silver medal performance of 1984. Is it even possible to oust the USSR from the gold medal place? That ought to be the goal, but a candid assessment would place us no nearer to it than in 1984. In fact in terms of psychological preparation we are further away, since in the meantime we have been told so often that Kasparov and Karpov are in a class above other grandmasters that the English GMs have become reconciled to thinking of themselves as second best. Apart from the undeniable strength of the two Ks' play, one can detect Gary Kasparov's talent for PR at work here. Realising that his own reputation is enhanced by that of the champion he has displaced, Kasparov never neglects to pay a handsome tribute to Karpov's abilities. The message keeps coming over that there are two giants, compared to whom the rest of you are pygmies.

In preparing themselves for the Olympiad the English squad will need to study the games played in Kiev at the 53rd USSR Championship in April. Although most of the leading Soviet players were absent from this event (1. Tseshkovsky, 2-3. Malanyuk and Eingorn, 4-7. Balashov, Bareyev, Gavrikov and Lerner), it is always an important testing ground for new ideas. For example, it should be noted that a number of Russian players have recently been experimenting with Bird's Defence to the Ruy Lopez (**1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nc6 3. Bb5 Nd4!?**). This was essayed in two games at Kiev, Dvoiris-Balashov and Beliavsky-Tseshkovsky, both of which continued: **4. Nxd4 exd4 5. 0-0 Bc5 6. d3 c6 7. Bc4 d5 8. exd5 cxd5 9. Bb3 Ne7.** Dvoiris now played **10. c4 0-0 11. cxd5 Nxd5 12. Nd2,** which allowed Black to equalise completely with the neat little combination **12 . . . Ne3 13. fxe3 dxe3 14. Qh5 exd2 + 15. Qxc5 dxc1 = Q 16. Raxc1 Be6.** After **10. Bg5 f6 11. Bf4 0-0 12. Nd2 Kh8 13. Re1 a5 14. a4** Beliavsky eventually succeeded in winning, though Black's game seems quite promising at this stage.

The sharpest opening play on show in Kiev developed from a Catalan in the game **Balashov-Beliavsky: 1. d4 d5 2. c4 e6 3. Nf3 Nf6 4. g3 dxc4 5. Bg2 b5 6. a4 c6 7. axb5 cxb5 8. Ne5 Nd5 9. Nc3 Bb4 10. 0-0 Bxc3 11. e4! Bxb2 12. exd5 Bxa1 13. Ba3 a5 14. Qg4 b4 15. Qxg7 Rf8 16. Rxa1** It would be an understatement to say that White's pieces are more active, but he has sacrificed a lot of material. Beliavsky now aspires to improve on Chernin-Yudasin, Sverdlovsk 1984, in which the attack continued with 16 . . . bxa3 17. dxe6 Bxe6 18. Bxa8 Qxd4 19. Rb1! But after **16 . . . Ra6 17. Bc1! exd5 18. Bh6 Rxh6 19. Qxh6 Be6 20. Re1 Qe7 21. Nxc4! dxc4 22. d5** found himself in big trouble. The finish was **Kd7 23. Qe3! Qd6 24. Qa7 + Qc7 25. dxe6 + fxe6 26. Qd4 + Kc8 27. Rxe6 c3 28. Bh3 Kb7 29. Qd5 + Ka7 30. Bg2 Na6 31. Rc6 1-0.**

Played with the intention of holding the draw, the Petroff Defence has proved itself to be an absolute pest to anyone aiming to win with 1. e4. The new champion produced a trick that aroused hopes of exterminating this obstructive defence in **Tseshkovsky-Bareyev: 1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 3. d4 Nxe4 4. Bd3 d5 5. Nxe5 Nd7 6. Nxd7 Bxd7 7. 0-0 Qf6 8. c4 Qxd4 9. Nc3 Nc5 10. Re1 + Be6 11. Rxe6 + ! Nxe6** Not 11 . . . fxe6? 12. Bg6 + . **12. cxd5** and since the Black Knight cannot move for fear of a Bishop check White won two pieces for his Rook after **Bc5 13. Be3 Qe5 14. dxe6 Bxe3 15. Bb5 + ! Kf8 16. Qf3 Qxe6 17. fxe3** with a clearly winning position. However, this is not likely to put the Petroff out of business. Even if Black does not wish to fall back on the fifth move alternatives 5 . . . Bd6 and 5 . . . Be7, it was really the young Bareyev's careless 9 . . . Nc5? that did the damage — after 9 . . . 0-0-0 10. Nxd5 Nc5 Black's game is sound enough.

George Botterill

New Statesman, 14-16 Farringdon Lane, London EC1R 3AU
Tel: 01-253 2001/Editorial: 01-253 2003
Telex: 28449/Cables: Newstat, London EC1
© 1986 Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd & contributors
Published by The Statesman & Nation Publishing Co Ltd
Distributed by NS Distribution

Editor: John Lloyd; **Books and Arts Editor:** Harriett Gilbert; **Writers:** Sarah Benton, Duncan Campbell, Jane Dibblin, Rob Edwards (Scotland), Patrick Forbes, Peter Kellner (Political Editor), Andrew Lumsden, John Rentoul; **Deputy Books & Arts Editor:** Malcolm Imrie; **Poetry Editor:** Hugo Williams; **Production Manager:** Joanne Hurst; **Art Editor:** Vicky Hutchings; **Editorial Assistant:** Jane Thomas

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Subscription rates: UK & Eire £40; Europe (air mail only £46); rest of world: air speeded £51; air mail £61. USA: air speeded $70; air mail $85. Canada: air speeded Can $90; air mail Can $115.

Second class postage paid at New York, NY USPS 382260. Air freight in US by Speedimpex USA Inc. (US Postmaster: Address changes should be sent to New Statesman, Speedimpex USA Inc., 45-45 39th Street, Long Island City, NY 11104)

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This England

£3 Book Tokens for entries printed.
(Postcards please.)

☐ The Cabinet has agreed to launch a direct attack on inner city deprivation by increasing the number of urban development corporations. — *The Independent* (A. Simons)

☐ More than £2,000 for police charities was raised at the Tory Party conference in Bournemouth largely because an officer on security duty there casually put his hat on a table. — *Sunday Post* (George Moor)

☐ A Tory MP is to live for a week on supplementary benefit with his wife and daughter in a council house to prove that the unemployed do not live in poverty. 'I will probably live a healthier existence because the unemployed get free entrance to local swimming pools.' But his wife is worried that she may not be able to afford hairspray. — *The Times* (Amanda Welles)

☐ Dr Eric Voice representing the pro-nuclear group PRONG, said there is firm evidence to suggest that radiation at around natural background levels can be of benefit and may even be essential for healthy life. Dr Voice was asked whether he would support people getting 'top-up' doses in areas where background radiation is low. He replied that this was an extreme suggestion and one which he would not advocate on the present state of knowledge — *The Scotsman* (O. Cowan)

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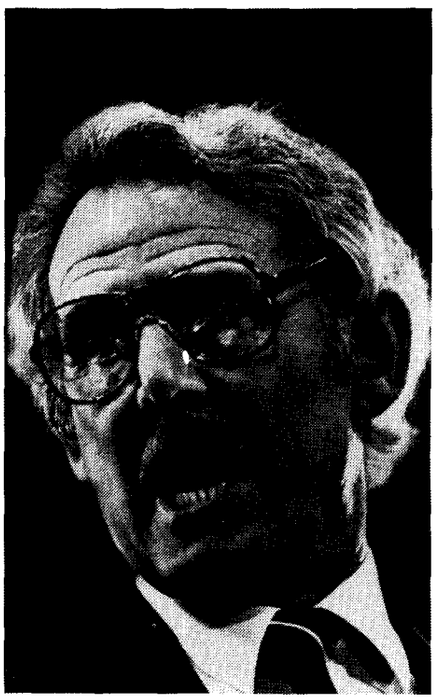
THESE PEOPLE ARE BEHIND THE PLAN FOR A SMALLER WAGE PACKET.



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